

Current Research Trends and Insights in Internal Communication

Internal Social Media
Change Communication
Leadership Communication

Rita Linjuan Men, Ph.D., APR, University of Florida, USA
Katy Robinson, University of Florida, USA
Patrick Thelen, University of Florida, USA



The Inevitable Trend: Social Media as a Strategic Communication Tool

**+2 billion
people**
worldwide
are users
of social
media

Uniqueness of social media

User-generated content, two-way, interactive, relational, communal, empowering, engaging, personal...

An unprecedented platform

For internal and external
stakeholder engagement



Internal Social Media

Two Types of Organizations' Internal Use of Social Media

GENERAL SOCIAL MEDIA

Used in/out of the workplace to talk about employer-related issues

E.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram.

ENTERPRISE SOCIAL MEDIA

Enterprise social media designed and only open to employees

E.g., Yammer, Facebook at Work.



Employees' Use of Social Media Regarding the Workplace

Benefits

(Opgenhafen & Claeys, 2017)

- Employee ambassadorship
- Indicate openness and trust
- Foster dialogic relationships

Concerns

(Opgenhafen & Claeys, 2017)

- Leak intellectual property
- Criticize management
- Articulate dissatisfaction
- Distraction from work
- Lost productivity

What Should Organizations Do?



Monitoring

Social media monitoring: “two-edged sword”



Policies

Develop social media policies to indicate clearly what information is appropriate to share



Training

Specific training courses and ambassadorship programs to encourage employees to share corporate messages

What Should Organizations Do? (cont'd)



Empowering

Empower a stable of employee advocates (e.g., the digital natives)



Content

Make content relevant and easy for employees to share



Rewarding

Reward employee voices (e.g., recognition, point system; link social media advocacy to an incentive system of employee referrals)

Internal/Enterprise Social Media



Access

It is restricted to members of this company.

Internal/Enterprise Social Media (Buettner, 2015)

It is a Social Networking Site operated by a company



Connectivity

It offers the members of the company the possibility to connect with other members of the company.



Personalization

It offers the members of the company the possibility to set up a personal profile.

These sites may include the following tools: social networks, wikis, forums, people tagging, file sharing, user profiles, blogs, microblogs, activity feeds, group support, tagging, tag clouds, RSS feeds, photo and file repositories, discussion threads and more.

The Effectiveness of Internal Social Media Organizations' Perspective

Use of Internal Social Media

Employee Engagement
(Haddud et al, 2016)

Workplace Productivity
(Bennett, et al. 2010)

Employee-Organization Relationships

Perceived Transparency and Authenticity
(Men & Hung, 2015)

Information/Knowledge Sharing



**Foster a
participative
and open
culture**

The Effectiveness of Internal Social Media

Employees' Perspective



Communication

Foster conversations



Collaboration

Promote collaboration among employees



Visibility

Make employees' interests and expertise visible to others



Connection

Connection among like-minded employees

The Effectiveness of Internal Social Media

Employees' Perspective (cont'd)



Community

Build community



Identity

Construct organizational identity (Madsen, 2016)



Empowerment

Empower employees by offering a venue to voice ideas, thoughts, and opinions

The Effectiveness of Internal Social Media

Leaders' Perspective



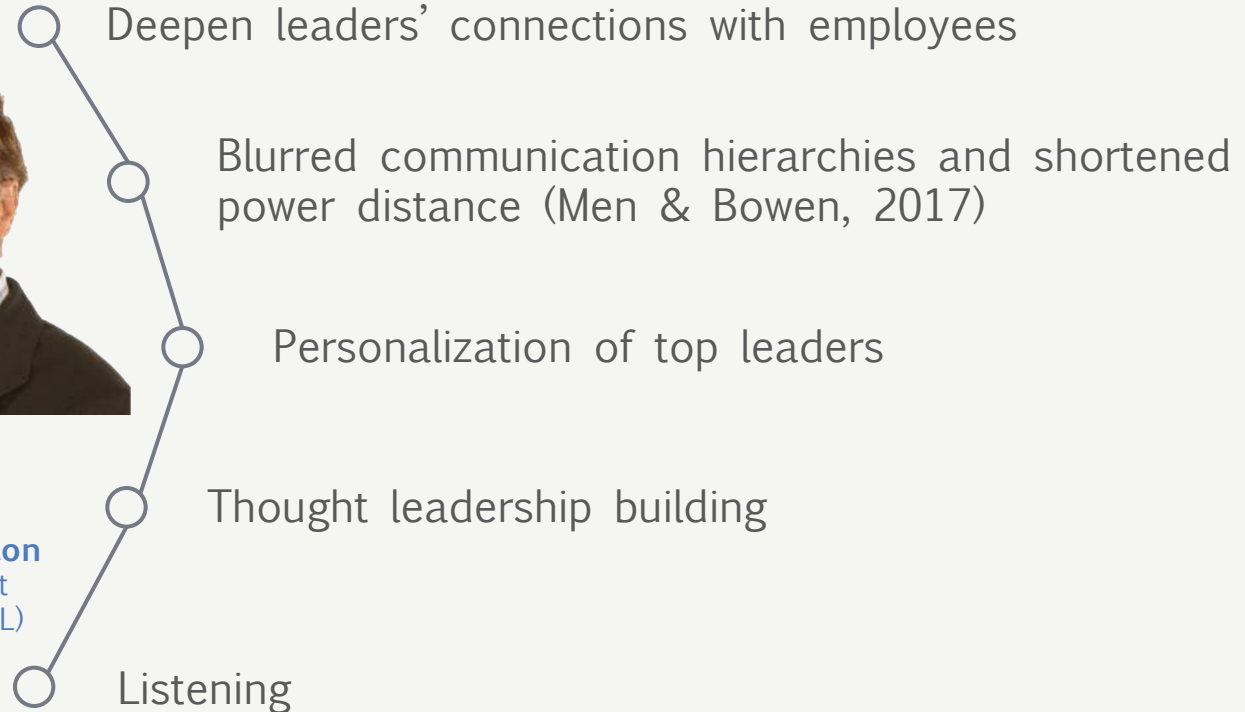
Richard Branson
Virgin



Bill Gates
Microsoft



Arianna Huffington
The Huffington Post
(now owned by AOL)



The other side of the coin...

Challenges of the Organization's Internal Use of Social Media

Lack of participation

Employee self-censorship (why?)
(Madsen & Verhoeven, 2016)

Employee resistance to change

Diverse tools and platforms and
not one-size-fits-all

Realistic concerns of the absence
of technology in non-networked
organizational settings

Providing low quality post/comments

Harming personal reputation (e.g., if no one
supports their opinion, the first to like a
controversial post, show ignorance)

Violating unwritten norms and rules

Comments and reactions from other
coworkers and managers



How to Overcome These Barriers?



Communicate

Communicate the benefits of internal social media to employees

Listen

Listen to employees to identify barriers in using/adopting internal social media in each unit

Promote

Promote an open and participative communication climate

Training

Provide training to familiarize employees with internal social media and operational procedures

Recognize

Recognize role models and reward active participants

Support

Management support to make employees feel trusted and empowered to depend on their self-judgment to post

Moving Forward: New Opportunities and Challenges with Emerging Technologies



Directions for Future Research

- Application of **emerging technologies** (e.g., virtual reality) in internal communications (e.g., onboarding, safety communication, change communication).
- Use of **internal social media in specific areas** such as change communication, crisis communication, etc.
- **Motivations in employees' use** of internal social media.
- **Explanation** of why/how internal social media works for **employee outcomes**.
- **Measurement** of internal social media **usage**.
- **Best practices**.



Closing Remarks

1

No one best communication channel that works across circumstances and through various contexts.

2

Social media can not replace interpersonal/face-to-face channels!

3

All technologies are “hard” assets that require the support of “soft” assets, such as the communication worldview and culture, before it can yield value. Means not the ends!

The Key to Success: Embracing Change

Business Environment



Increases in technology, globalization & consumer awareness have contributed to a dynamic and ever-changing business environment (Sison, 2017)

Change
&
Success

Willingness to commit to and implement change can be major indicators of short and long-term success (Men & Bowen, 2016)

Strategic
Communication
can activate
resistance or
acceptance &
is critical to
the change
lifecycle
(Sommerfeldt &
Yang, 2017)

Lack of effective communication

It is often reported as a contributor to unsuccessful change initiatives. (Barrett, 2002; Elving, 2005; Lewis, 2002, Sison, 2017)

Preparing for Change



Nimble organizational functions make accommodating change a simpler proposition

Planning the change

Organizations who plan for change are better able to adapt and communicate changes as they happen and are better positioned to accommodate change (Bimber, Flanagin & Stohl, 2012; Ulmer, Sellnow & Seeger, 2013)

- Technologies
- Values
- Processes
- Teams

Strategic Change

Organizations & their stakeholders face many types of change

(Broom & Sha, 2013; Kim & Krishna, 2017; Laskin, 2012)



Market change

New product offerings



Leadership change

New CEO



Organizational change

New rules or culture

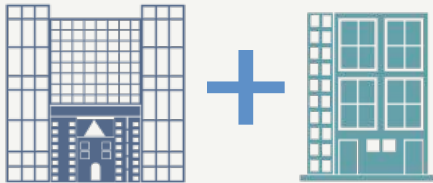
Strategic Change (cont'd)

The change continuum

(de Mello Freire, 2017; Sommerfeldt & Yang, 2017)

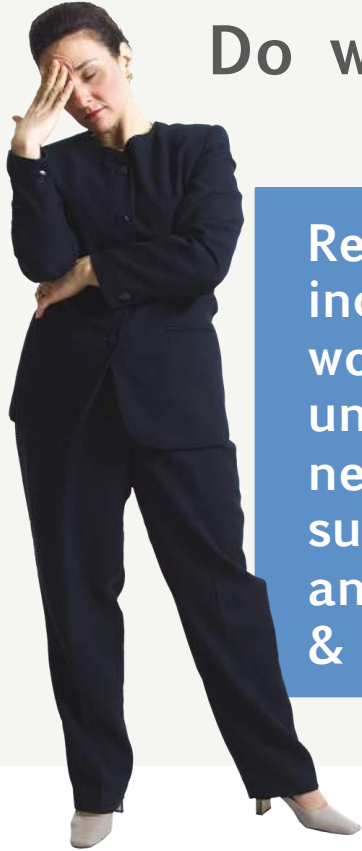


Regular changes take place routinely, as part of daily organizational life.



Non-routine changes such as relocation, mergers & acquisitions and leadership changes are less frequent and make a bigger impact.

The Impact of Change & Communication



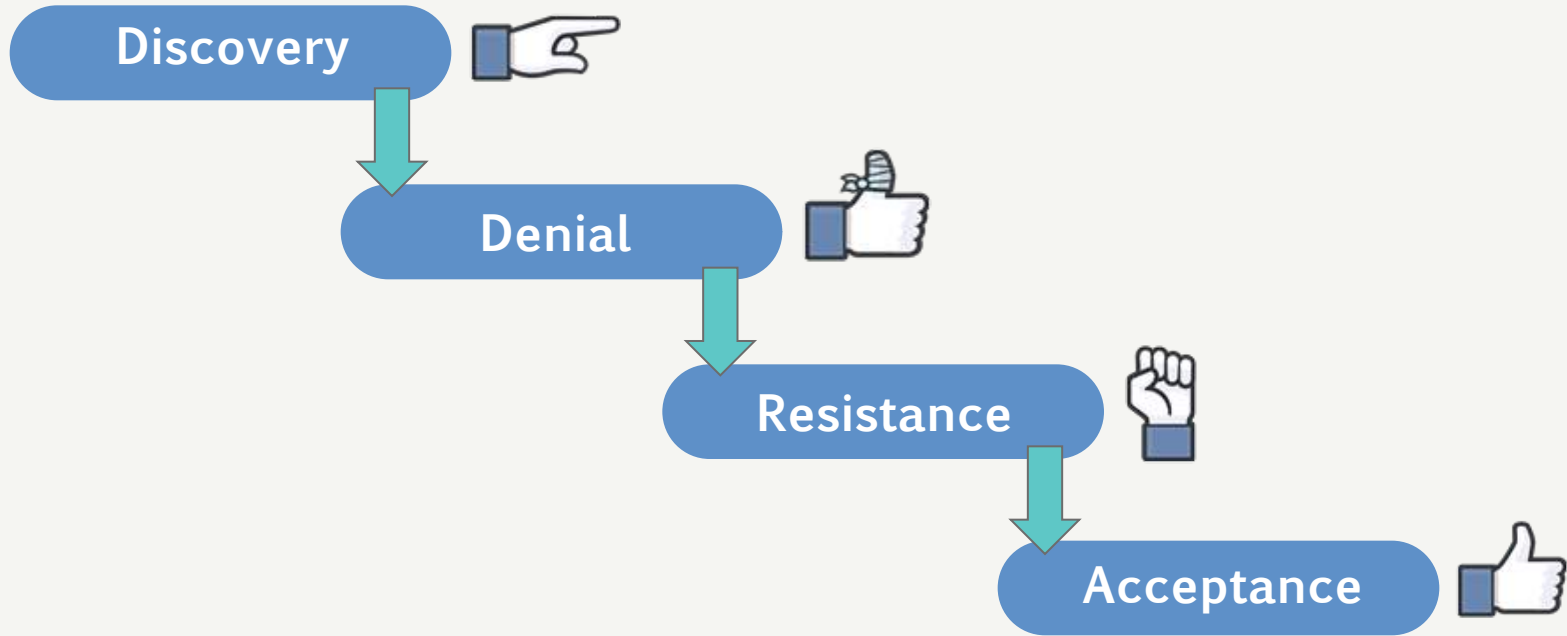
Do we fear change?

Research shows that inconsistencies in our work life can lead to uncertainty and negative emotions such as fear, stress and frustration (Luo & Jiang, 2014)

Continuous communication (Gergs & Trinczek, 2008; Kim & Krishna, 2017)

- Provides information
- Provides stability
- Establishes a foundation of trust which serves to reduce anxieties and fear

The Stages of Change



Hovland & Lumsdaine, 2017; LaFramboise, Nelson & Schmaltz, 2002.

Overcoming Resistance



Resistance

Research shows resistance is one of the biggest obstacles communicators face in communicating change (Bull & Brown, 2012; Sha, 2017).



Communication & Attitude

Open and transparent communication help build trust and positive attitudes toward change (Abitbol & Lee, 2016; Neill & Hua, 2017).

Develop specific communications that address:

- Reason for the change
- Possible outcomes of the change
- Possible benefits of the change

Building Mutual Participation & Understanding

Involving employees

Involving employees early, often, and continuously throughout the process of change encourages a sense of ownership and empowerment over results (Men & Bowen, 2016)



Visionary communication is key
(Johansson & Heide, 2008; Martinelli & Erzikova, 2017)

Language that tells a story

Planned meaningful content

Clear and easy-to-understand information

Connects employees' day-to-day work to organization's mission

What Should Organizations Do?: Strategies

Communication Strategies

Specific communication strategies signal employee involvement, validate concerns and inspire trust:

○ **Transparent & open communication**
It says “You’re in the loop, and we want your input.”
(Abitbol & Lee, 2016; Neill & Hua, 2017)

○ **Listening & upward communication**
It says “You are heard, your concerns are valid, and important.”
(Sommerfeldt & Yang, 2017)

○ **Leader involvement**
It says “We are partners in change and I want to help manage the impact.”
(Ulmer et al., 2013)

Employee Participation

Employee support for change increases as they **participate** in the **change** initiative
(Men & Bowen, 2016).



What Should Organizations Do?: Tactics

Change Messages

The effectiveness of change messages can be reinforced through specific channels (Clampitt, 2001; Clayton, 2015).

Communication Tactics

Specific communication tactics and channels reduce uncertainty, increase understanding and foster acceptance:



Face-to-face communication

It says “We are all in this together.” (Men & Bowen, 2016; Sprecher, & Hampton, 2017)



Digital Communication

It says “You are a part of shaping the future.” (Clayton, 2015)



Source Information

It says “What this means for us.” (Kim & Krishna, 2017)

Closing Remarks

1

Willingness to engage in change and the extent to which an organization communicates about change can be indicators of overall success in today's business environment.

2

Change communication serves multiple roles in change management (i.e., reduce uncertainty, overcome resistance, increase participation).

3

Change communication should facilitate change through multiple strategies (i.e., openness, transparency, leadership involvement) and channels (i.e.; face-to-face, digital).

...So What is Leadership?



Leadership

“There are as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define this concept” (Stogdill, 1974).

Recognizing leadership

Leadership is exercised when **thoughts expressed in talk or action are recognized by others as capable of progressing tasks** or problems which are important to them” (Robinson, 2001).

Leadership
creates and
manages
meaning

Social Influence

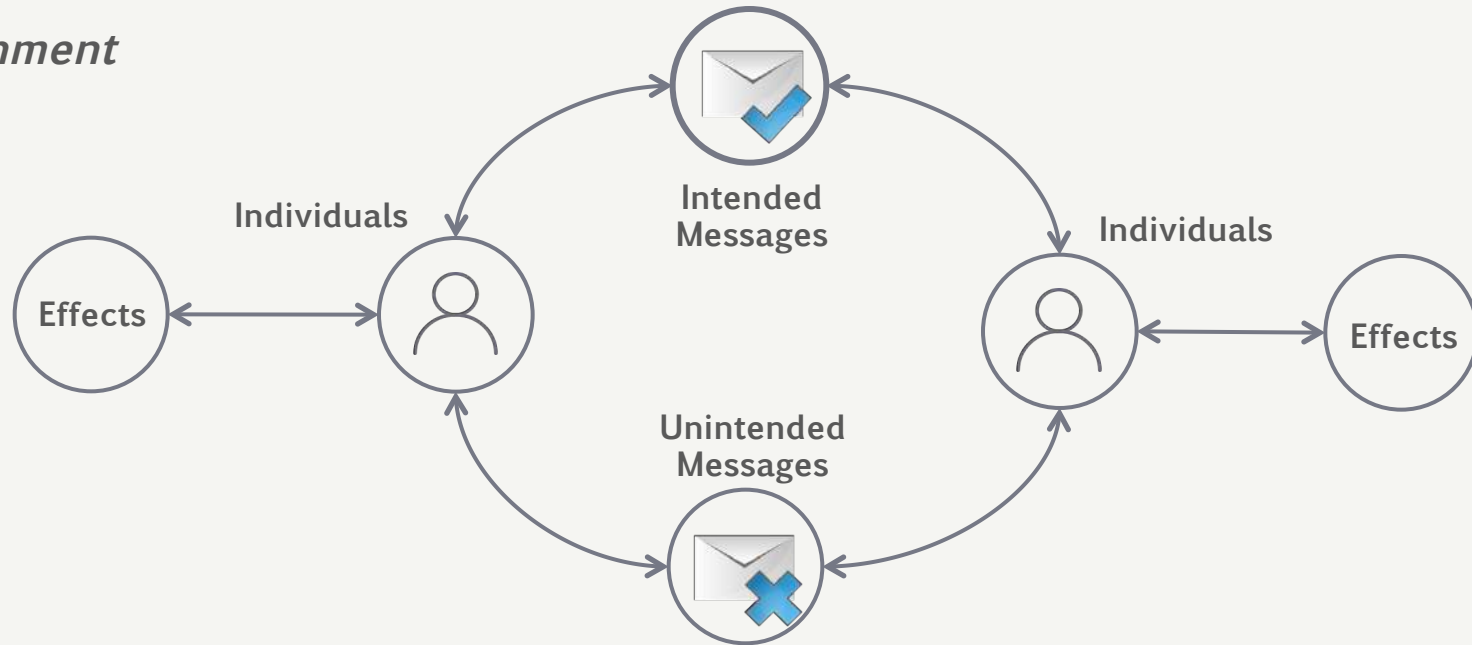
Leadership is a **process of social influence** that is planned and unplanned, formal and informal, and **defined as much by the leader as the follower** (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2016).

Leadership as Social Influence

Systems Perspective on Communication

(Ruben & Gigliotti, 2017)

Environment



Senior-Leadership Communication



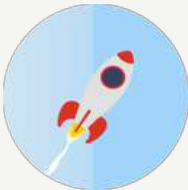
Importance

Senior-leadership communication plays a critical role in shaping an organization's image, and influences trust in leadership, confidence in the organization, and performance (Men, 2015).



Role model

Senior corporate leaders are expected to not only convey vision and values but also act as role models (Bowen, 2015).



Organizational success

Critical role of senior leaders' strategic vision communication in attaining organizational success. Potential to motivate employees and improve their work lives (Mayfield et al., 2015).

Senior-Leadership: Communication Styles

Leaders may use different styles to effectively communicate with different people on different topics and at different times.

Communication Styles

They are divided into two broad categories

Assertive leadership

Focuses on the task dimension (i.e., dominant, forceful, aggressive, competitive)

Responsive leadership

Focuses on the relational dimension (i.e., good listener, empathetic, compassionate, warm)

Senior-Leadership: Communication Channels

Electronic Platforms

Electronic platforms, such as streaming media, blogs, and social networking sites, have become popular among CEOs (Men, 2015).

Social CEOs

Social CEOs are more likely to be perceived as responsive communicators by employees (Men, 2015).

Social Media' features

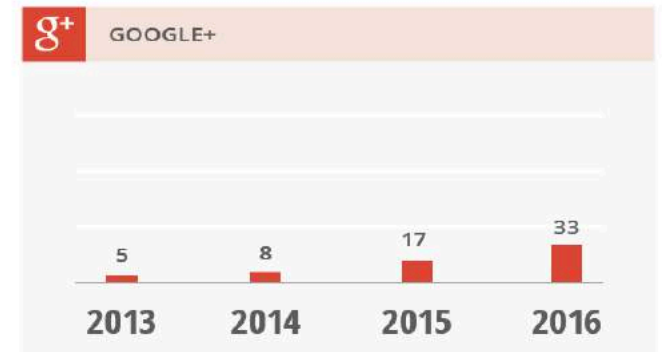
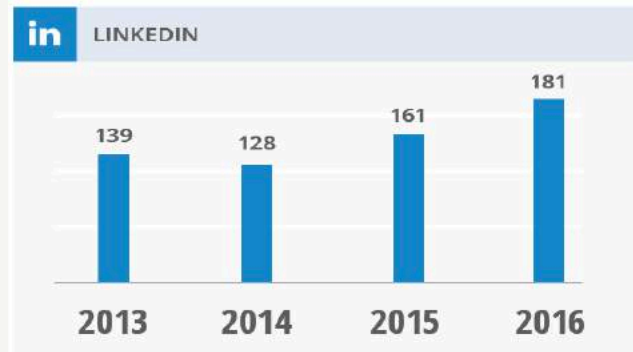
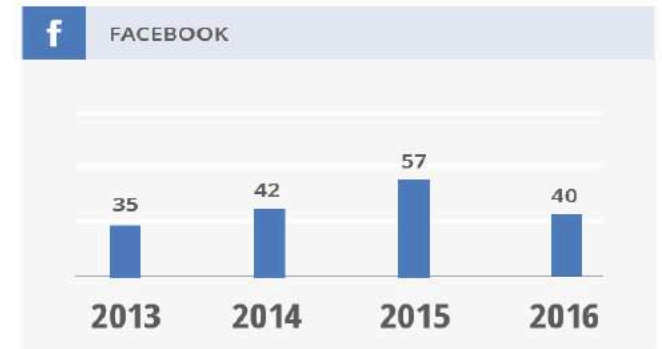
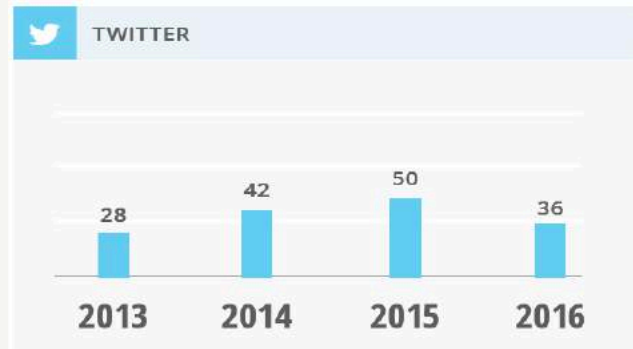
The interactive, empowering, and relational features of social media can bring CEOs to life.



Social CEOs

In 2016,
60% of
Fortune 500
CEOs had
no social
media
presence.

LinkedIn
remains the
first
channel
CEOs
adopt.

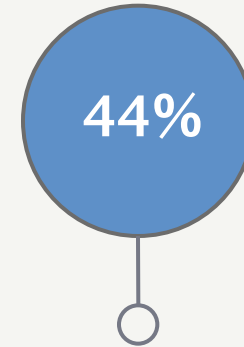


CEO Activism

Millennials & CEO's



Nearly one-half of Millennials (47%) believe **CEOs have a responsibility to speak up** about issues that are important to society, far outpacing the sentiments of Gen Xers and Boomers (28% each).



44% of Millennials say **they would be more loyal** to their organization if their own **CEO took a public position** on a hotly debated current issue (only 16% of Gen Xers and 18% of Boomers would be more loyal).

Closing Remarks

1

Leadership communication strategy should be systematic.

2

“Cannot Not Communicate”.

3

Followers play an instrumental role in making leadership work.

Thank you

We appreciate your questions,
thoughts and feedback!



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