



## Engaging Employees to DRIVE Doe Run - A Business Strategy Launch Campaign

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Standing Partnership and ProWolfe Partners and The Doe Run Company, Jan 1,2013

**Summary:** 2013 Silver Anvil Award of Excellence Winner — Internal Communications — Business (Fewer Than 10,000 Employees)

When The Doe Run Company updated its business strategy, the organization needed to inform, educate and engage employees to support the new strategy. With the help of a cross-functional team, Doe Run branded the strategy around the word DRIVE, and executives conducted 31 interactive and themed meetings to reach all 1500 employees. Support materials included a logo, video, newsletter, posters and leave-behind items, to “DRIVE” employee awareness of the strategy. Pre- and post-campaign research showed an 11 percent increase in employees’ understanding of the strategy, and helped employees recognize how they can positively impact Doe Run’s future.

Internal communications includes programs targeted specifically to special publics directly allied with an organization, such as employees, members, affiliated dealers and franchisees.

### **Full Text: SITUATION / RESEARCH**

The Doe Run Company (Doe Run) is a mining and metals company and the largest integrated lead producer in the Western Hemisphere. In early 2011, company executives faced several business changes that would impact the future of the company, including closure of a plant, development of a new metal processing technology and an evolving marketplace. As a first step in addressing these changes, executives evaluated and updated Doe Run’s business strategy, vision, mission and values.

Around that same time, Doe Run surveyed employees on its internal communications effectiveness. Responses revealed a noticeable deficiency in workers’ knowledge of the company’s business strategy. Only 30 percent of employees knew the business strategy, while only 26 percent felt information was shared readily. In addition, the research indicated that only 38 percent of employees felt informed about changes affecting their area, and just over 33 percent gave senior leaders high marks on communication.

Secondary research indicated that failure to successfully launch a business strategy can risk up to 30 percent of the full economic potential of a strategy, lead to misallocation of resources, disengage employees and impact a company’s ability to operate. Armed with data that showed high-performing companies have aligned employees who understand the company’s business strategy, the communications department obtained the support of the executive team for a companywide campaign to educate and empower all employees to carry out the new strategy.

### **PLANNING**

To effectively communicate the strategy to employees, Doe Run first had to consider key characteristics of its workforce. Doe Run employs 1,559 people (73 percent hourly) at its four divisions and corporate headquarters. As most of the company’s operations run 24/7, employees begin shifts at various times and are not able to meet at one time to share

information. And, as the majority of workers perform manual labor in Doe Run's mines, mills and smelter, digital communication is limited.

*Overall Plan/Strategy:* Doe Run convened a cross-functional team of employees to guide how the business strategy would be disseminated to peers. Led by the senior communications liaison, this cross-functional team considered how best to address key communication challenges, including the large and diverse group of employees (predominately skilled labor) with few cross-communication opportunities. The team developed a plan to host a series of in-person meetings to launch the business strategy to all employees. To do this effectively, the team created a strategy to involve executives and fellow employees (Peer Champions) to help employees understand how to embody the business strategy.

*Objectives:* The team identified objectives based on metrics that had been measured in 2010 and would be measured again through an employee communications audit in 2012:

- Increase the number of employees who know Doe Run's business strategy from 30, to 40 percent.
- Increase the number of employees who know Doe Run's vision and mission from 45, to 50 percent.
- Increase the number of employees who know Doe Run's values from 40, to 45 percent.

## **EXECUTION**

To fine-tune the strategy launch tactics, the team convened focus groups of employees from various locations, shifts and employment levels. Together, the team determined the launch should:

- Communicate the business strategy in concise, easy-to-remember messages.
- Incorporate materials that would be easily accessible to employees throughout their day.
- Share the strategy in fast-paced, face-to-face, multi-media gatherings.
- Include training for group discussion-leaders in advance, enabling them to lead discussions at launch meetings to help employees understand their personal connection to the business strategy.
- Leverage the input and support of "Peer Champions," to articulate their support of the campaign.
- Reinforce the campaign with future materials to provide updates on efforts to uphold the strategy.

Inspired by the idea of how a road map helps drivers reach their destination, the launch team created the DRIVE acronym, in which each letter defined an element of Doe Run's business strategy. This acronym also helped boil down the business strategy into easy-to-remember messages. Building on this concept, Doe Run, design agency ProWolfe Partners, and communications firm Standing Partnership, created a comprehensive toolkit of materials to support the DRIVE rollout, including:

- A DRIVE logo, based on a car's shift indicator, shifting to reveal a definition of each tenet.
- A banner series for the launch meetings, featuring the DRIVE acronym and elements of the strategy.
- A business strategy rollout video, featuring Doe Run's CEO explaining what the new strategy means for employees. The video helped carry a consistent message to employees at every meeting.
- A poster series highlighting Peer Champions, illustrating employees' personal commitment to DRIVE.
- A strategy overview "Roadmap" poster, hung at each facility to reiterate key points from the video.
- A wallet card to serve as a convenient reference tool for each employee.
- A DRIVE-branded hat to incentivize attendance at meetings and help employees recall

the strategy.

- A copy of *It's Drive Time*, a quarterly newsletter, to update employees about business strategy efforts.
- A presentation template based on the DRIVE message for use at each division.

Armed with these materials, the team partnered with executives to facilitate the DRIVE launch meetings at all divisions. Following a video introduction and presentation from the CEO, executives participated in breakout sessions to lead discussions on how employees could personally connect with the strategy.

**Challenges:** Due to the company's multiple locations and shift employees, the rollout had to be presented many times. As a solution, the team conducted 31 launch meetings, but varied the start times and spaced meetings from October 2011 through January 2012. Another challenge the team anticipated was employee resistance or indifference. To overcome this, Doe Run identified fellow employees who were perceived as leaders to provide specific examples of how they DRIVE Doe Run in their daily work. They were featured in the Peer Champion poster series to jumpstart employee acceptance of the strategy.

**Budget:** The budget for the launch was \$105,944, most of which supported collateral development. Careful resource management enabled the team to come in 14 percent under budget, at \$90,937.

## EVALUATION

Employees immediately embraced the business strategy launch, and more than 90 percent of employees attended the meetings. People proactively began including the message in their email signatures, requesting the DRIVE presentation templates for internal use and using the DRIVE language in daily conversation. In addition, Doe Run's project management office integrated a step in their system to help employees determine how each proposed project supports the DRIVE strategy.

One way Doe Run measured the effectiveness of the launch was through focus group evaluations. Focus group participants provided positive feedback, indicating that the meetings were "easy and fun to follow," and that the "program engaged employees and made them apply the information to their own jobs." The 2012 employee communication audit provided the greatest insight into the campaign's success. Feedback from 86 percent of employees, a very high response rate, showed that:

- 41 percent of employees know or know well the business strategy, compared to 30 percent from the previous survey in 2010, exceeding Doe Run's goal of 10 percent improvement.
- 59 percent of employees understand how their job fits with the strategy, up from 55 percent in 2010.
- 50 percent of employees understand Doe Run's mission and vision, up from 45 percent in 2010.
- 49 percent of employees reported an improved understanding of company values, exceeding the team's 45 percent goal and accounting for an increase of 9 percent.
- 34 percent of employees believed that information is readily shared throughout the company, an improvement from 26 percent in the 2010.

Moving forward, employee engagement with the business strategy will continue to be measured through the semi-annual employee communication audit. Quarterly issues of the company's employee newsletter, *It's Drive Time*, will show how employees and new initiatives support the strategy. The company's new website continues to support the DRIVE campaign by featuring the Peer Champions on the career pages of the site. The company will also provide more DRIVE-branded items for employees, encourage the use of internal DRIVE campaign tools and require annual project planning to tie back to the strategy. Through targeted communication and a shared focus on its business direction, Doe Run will collectively DRIVE to a successful

future.

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