

## PARTNER PROFILE SERIES

*Corporate perspectives, actions, and goals***Work-Life Communications**

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This issue of the Partner Profile series presents the perspectives, actions and goals of three of our Corporate Partners who use unique approaches and methods to communicate about a broad range of work-life initiatives.

Rolando Balli, *Work/Life Strategist***Perspective**

Having the best employee value proposition is a business driver for Dell, and employees are telling us that work-life is important, including the way it is communicated. In July of 2007 we launched a social media tool – an ideation blog – that we call Employee Storm. We had used a similar version successfully with customers to shape products, so we brought it in-house to help shape internal offerings. Any employee can post ideas about anything at Dell. Other employees then comment on the idea and promote or demote it. To date, the second highest-rated idea overall is “Going Green: How About Work from Home?” People have also posted ideas about commuting solutions, buying vacation days, and other work-life topics. This has been a revelation for us – because of this tool the top work-life needs of our employees have really surfaced.

What we learned from Employee Storm prompted us to create our first-ever work-life survey, launched in July 2008. Its distribution was viral – we posted the link on the blog and attached it to email signatures. Only one email was sent to encourage participation, yet 19% of employees took the survey. One of the questions asked employees about their preferred communications methods. Email ranked number one, followed by manager, and then blog. Employee Storm remains an important tool – it helps us learn exactly what our people want and need, and to target solutions based on businesses and regions.

**Goals**

From reviewing our work-life survey data, it's clear that there is a direct link between management support of work-life and the level of employee engagement and satisfaction. Employee engagement is one of our primary goals, so we are putting more effort into communicating with senior leaders, encouraging them to tell their stories and to become vocal supporters of flexibility. Similarly, we are focusing communications to managers around engagement in and support for work-life, particularly flexibility.

**Actions**

In addition to Employee Storm we use other social media, like Yam-

mer, a tool that allows the creation of groups on any topic of interest. Like the blog, Yammer is the voice of employees, and it helps us to identify problems and solutions. For example, one Yammer group, called Homeworkers at Dell, was created by employees to share best practices while working from home. Dell employees in the New York region used the Yammer group to identify other local employees who were working from home and wanted to get together to “co-work” regularly. That's a great solution for others who are working remotely and want to feel part of a team.

Despite its strengths, social media does not replace in-person interaction or other traditional communications. All-hands meetings and one-on-ones are very important venues, and we have toolkits for those. We also have a new toolkit on “Global & Virtual Teaming” to help people with working across time zones and locations. We are exploring video logs or vlogs as another vehicle. As a green company, Dell tries to stay away from creating physical collateral such as posters, but otherwise, our communications run the gamut. It is most impactful when people hear support for work-life directly from a leader's mouth. For example, Michael Dell recently held an all-hands meeting for our employee resource groups. When someone asked about work-life Michael said that he's excited about our experimentation around flexibility because we want our people to be happy. If we can get enough people to see that even the owner of the company supports them – it has a huge impact on engagement.

Jennifer Demirdjian, *U.S. Work/Life Manager, Office of Diversity***Perspective**

Several years ago, the Firm conducted our national Great Place to Work Pulse Survey for the first time. Our people told us that in a demanding client service environment, work-life issues clearly presented some of their largest and most complex challenges. We also discovered that despite what we believed was a comprehensive communications approach, a large percentage of our people were still unaware of our work-life initiatives. Up until that point, we focused primarily on communicating messages through our corporate intranet site, and during new hire on-boarding activities. We learned that people needed more real time, life-cycle focused communications. When you join the Firm as an associate, back-up childcare is not always top-of-mind. It's not until after having a child – and perhaps even after returning from leave – that our emergency backup childcare program has real meaning. And while the information has always been available on-line, that doesn't mean our people always knew to look for it.

**Goals**

Since work-life means something different to each person at the Firm, we know we need a multi-channeled, multi-focused approach that incorporates both ‘push’ and ‘pull’ communications.

It is also important that our messages move beyond our program descriptions and policies, which until now defined the 'old-way' of talking about work-life. Many of our people felt this was simply ineffective or even insincere if not partnered with clear statements of support from our leadership and suggestions and examples of how people could take advantage of the resources. In order to re-brand work-life, we need a new, dynamic message – one that our people can be inspired by and personally identify with. We need to reach our people through more creative channels and find ways to reach them at different points throughout their career. We also want to inspire our people to do what they do best – create custom and innovative solutions; and to recognize that the best solutions don't always come packaged in a program – sometimes you need to be your own trailblazer.

## Actions

We've learned that there are as many communications vehicles as there are definitions of work-life. We communicate through multiple lines of service and national newsletters, leverage our many diversity networking circles (or employee resource groups) and target the human resources community and national leave center – recognizing they are often the gatekeepers of information and 'first line' communicators with our partners and staff during pivotal life events. We now work closely with our national marketing and brand experts to design specific topic-oriented campaigns that often incorporate multi-media approaches such as poster campaigns, videos and email messages from our leaders. We have redesigned our intranet site and have created 'one-stop-shop' microsites for people to access program information and policies with greater ease. Two examples are our Prepared Parent and Working Parent microsites. One of the most critical enhancements to our work-life communications has been the use of video and personal testimonials. Video brings an initiative to life and shows our people that we're talking about more than a program. Each installment of our Candid Conversations video series features a panel of experts on a topic such as work and motherhood, or women and ambition. Personal testimony, whether in video or on the web, illustrates the creative ways colleagues leverage Firm resources to manage their personal responsibilities and outside interests. These new efforts have really transformed both how we talk about work-life quality and how our people obtain it.



Diana Phillips, *Associate Director of Employee Relations*

## Perspective

Verizon Wireless has more than 86,000 employees at thousands of locations across the U.S. including corporate offices, call centers, mall kiosks, and retailer partnerships. The company wants to make sure that when employees are at work, they're healthy, stay focused on their jobs, and have a work-life balance that allows them to be happy. In short, a healthy happy workforce makes for healthy happy customers. Work-life communication is organized around this health-based perspective.

Communications at Verizon Wireless are directed toward our young, active workforce. The average age of employees is 34. The company deliberately takes advantage of a wide range of com-

munication channels, using every opportunity to connect with employees about our work-life programs.

## Goals

Program utilization drives communications. Verizon Wireless identifies key programs and utilization goals at the beginning of each year and tracks utilization on a monthly and quarterly basis, using a scorecard shared with the Senior Vice President.

Senior leadership participation is another goal. The executive leaders are all very physically fit and understand the connection between health and productivity on a personal level. All are members of company-owned health centers. When leaders speak to employees at quarterly addresses or local town halls, they regularly make references to working out. These meetings are about business results, and health is deliberately included as a way to keep the issue at the front of employees' minds.

An additional goal is to gain public recognition on best-in-class lists, including the Working Mother's Top 100 and Training magazine's Top 125. The PR department uses a portal called vzweb, where employees go for business information, to announce these external awards to employees. The recognitions highlight work-life programs and positively impact employee morale.

## Actions

Employees visit Verizon Wireless's intranet site, "About You," for information about five categories of programs: work-life, health, money, career, and training. The company posts new articles on the homepage daily in order to remind employees to take advantage of the excellent programs offered.

Verizon Wireless has more than 30 health and wellness centers in the U.S., typically located at call centers. At the health centers, 49 full-time coaches run approximately 450 activities and events monthly, including nutrition classes, recreation leagues, and screening tests. The coaches also do one-on-one personal training – 6,000 appointments last year. Coaches are a critical element of the work-life communications strategy. They email one tip per day to the 13,500 members of the centers, including reminders about the entire range of work-life programs, like EAP and back-up care. The members become vocal ambassadors for wellness and work-life, based on their personal experience at the centers, as well as the information they receive from coaches.

Another very effective communications element is providing HR representatives, those with direct relationships with managers, supervisors, and employees, the tools they need – such as talking points and brochures to use in group meetings and one-on-ones. There is also one annual mailer sent to employees' homes, so that family members are aware of valuable resources available to them, including EAP.

Finally, an annual enrollment fair at all major locations has had great success. All national vendors are invited to participate and the company takes the opportunity to educate employees about the range of work-life programs supported by Verizon Wireless.