

case study

Success Stories From Buck Consultants

Gaining Trust through Effective Communication

Targeted, consistent, and candid communication builds trust with employees during major change and helps employees understand what's in it for them.

"Whether the specific issue is emerging from Chapter 11 or controlling health care costs, a fundamental underlying theme is that an engaged workforce is not only a powerful competitive advantage, it's really the only avenue to success."

**– Chris Collins,
HR Service Delivery Leader,
Delta Air Lines**

CLIENT ISSUE

Delta Air Lines, one of the world's leading airlines, prepared to emerge from bankruptcy as a strong, stand-alone carrier. During bankruptcy, Delta's 40,000 employees sacrificed a great deal, including two pay cuts in two years, job losses, the erosion of benefits, and changes in leadership. Delta engaged Buck Consultants to help implement an emergence-from-bankruptcy communication strategy designed to rebuild employee trust and engagement.

SOLUTION

In partnership with Buck, Delta launched a "Wheels Up" campaign that aimed to be educational, celebratory, and culture building. Within days of the assignment, Buck created a printed, bi-fold brochure that previewed the total compensation rewards employees would receive after emergence. Just prior to employee receipt of the highlights brochure, managers received specific materials, such as anticipated questions and answers, designed to help them rebuild employee trust by communicating openly, honestly, and personally.

Two weeks later, employees received an inspirational DVD explaining what Delta's emergence from bankruptcy would mean for them. The DVD described Delta's commitment to share rewards with employees, such as a package delivering \$1 billion to employees in the form of cash rewards, equity, pay increases, profit-sharing, incentives, and retirement funding. For employees, the DVD was meaningful and personal.

Finally, Buck developed and delivered personalized statements for every non-union employee who shared in the rewards of Delta's emergence from bankruptcy. Twelve versions of the statement met the needs of multiple employee groups. Timing was critical: Employees received a personalized statement before the money even hit their bank accounts and Delta stock began trading!

This campaign was implemented in less than three months.

RESULTS

Buck and Delta confirmed that engaging employees – even through circumstances as difficult as bankruptcy – is possible, powerful, and based on trust. Sharing rewards with employees, in the form of pay increases, incentives, and retirement plan funding, served as both a retention and engagement tool.

The Wheels Up campaign was a monumental success. *The Atlanta Journal Constitution* gave the story front-page business section coverage with headlines that included “Delta pay plan wins praise,” “Employees express satisfaction,” and “Payout plan gives morale a boost.” Within a short period of time, Buck helped Delta regain the trust of employees, and its position in the competitive market. Delta entered new markets, raised industry standards, improved on-time and baggage performance, and maintained customer satisfaction.

CONTACT US

For more information about this project or other successful employee communication campaigns, contact Jill Spielberger at 770.916.4137 or via email at Jill.Spielberger@buckconsultants.com.

