

Ask the Expert

Q: I am an internal communications consultant working for a public European organisation. One of my tasks is to advise senior management and help the directors improve and diversify the way they communicate internally, in a rather difficult context of change. Would you have any background reading on best practice, benchmarking and statistics that I could use for developing an efficient solution for the organisation?

A: A question about background reading recently surfaced on the listserv of the Council of Communication Management, with many great suggestions offered from members. Communication consultant Jim Shaffer, of the Jim Shaffer Group, also maintains a comprehensive list with a heavy focus on business strategy and management. With Jim's input, I compiled a master list concerning all things related to business, communication and analysis. This should keep your senior management team busy for some time.

Topic	Title	Author	Synopsis
Business Strategy	<i>Competing for the Future</i>	Hamel and Prahalad	Current thinking around strategy and the new competitive landscape.
	<i>Competitive Advantage and Competitive Strategy</i>	Porter	Both represent a solid grounding on business strategy, the first focusing on the difference between low cost strategies and differentiation or value-adding strategies. If you only want to read one, read CA.
	<i>The Experience Economy</i>	Pine and Gilmore	Moving from commodity to differentiation to selling an experience. Think Starbucks.
	<i>The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning</i>	Mintzberg	The history of strategic planning and how it can stifle execution.
Organizational Development	<i>Corporate Culture and Performance</i>	Kotter and Heskett	Fundamental research on culture alignment—the need to have a balanced focus on customers and employees in order to deliver shareholder returns
	<i>The Human Side of</i>	McGregor	The first work about our fundamental beliefs

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	<i>Enterprise</i>		about people—where Theory X and Y started.
	<i>Organizational Development—Principles and Practices</i>	Burke	An organization development primer.
Management	<i>Open Book Management</i>	Case	An introduction to the concept of creating a business of business people, where everyone works to improve the financial score. Business literacy personified.
	<i>Out of the Crisis</i>	Deming	The classic!
	<i>The Practice of Management</i>	Drucker	A Drucker foundation book on the basics of business.
	<i>Practice What You Preach</i>	Maister	Excellent correlation and causation research regarding employee research scores and financial performance.
	<i>Stewardship</i>	Block	One of the best arguments for empowerment over control from the author of <i>The Empowered Manager</i> . This book emphasizes the soft side of the argument. Soft is hard.
Communication	<i>Why Business People Speak Like Idiots</i>	Fugere, Hardaway and Warshawsky	Don't know much about this but the title is intriguing. It was recommended.
	<i>Made to Stick</i>	Chip Heath and Dan Heath	Why some ideas survive and others die
	<i>Corporate Conversations</i>	Shel Holtz	A guide to crafting effective and appropriate internal communications
	<i>Working Knowledge</i>	Davenport and Prusak	A knowledge management primer.
	<i>You Don't Say</i>	Audrey Nelson	Navigating non-verbal communication between the sexes
Leadership	<i>The Leadership Solution</i>	Jim Shaffer	Step-by-step plan that helps business leaders manage communication to engage people in substantially improving

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			business performance.
	<i>Good to Great</i>	Jim Collins	One of the best books with case studies on how successful businesses became great. He also wrote Built to Last.
	<u><i>The Credible Company: Communicating with a Skeptical Workforce</i></u>	Roger D'Aprix	Published November 2008. Quite timely and D'Aprix is well-respected in our industry.
	<i>The Secret Language of Leadership</i>	Stephen Denning	How leaders inspire action through narrative
	<i>Why Should the Boss Listen to You?</i>	Lukaszewski	The Seven disciplines of the trusted strategic advisor. Really good read if you are looking to increase your influence.
	<i>The Leadership Challenge</i>	Kouzes and Posner	Along with Warren Bennis' On Becoming a Leader, the best and most enduring discussion about leadership.
Social media	<i>Groundswell</i>	Li and Bernoff	Winning in a world transformed by social technologies. This was recommended as the must-read for social networking.
	<i>Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything,</i>	Tapscott and Williams	A practical discussion of the current and potential benefits of mass collaboration Linux style.
	<i>Grown up Digital</i>	Tapscott	How the Net generation is changing your world: October 2008
	<i>Mobilizing Generation 2.0:</i>	Ben Rigby	A Practical Guide to Using Web2.0 Technologies to Recruit, Organize and Engage Youth: Jan 2008
	<i>Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us</i>	Seth Godin	"A tribe is a group of people connected to one another"...the story of a software company leader and how he's changing the world.
Change Management	<i>Managing Transitions: Making the most of change</i>	William Bridges	William Bridges is well-known in the area of change. This also comes in an interactive version. Features his transition

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			model. It's not the change that does you in, it's the transitions.
	<i>Slowing Down to the Speed of Life</i>	Carlson and Bailey	How to create a more peaceful, simpler life from the inside out.
	<i>Leading Change</i>	John Kotter	Still one of the best examples of the leadership required to bring on change. Goes through his 8-step model.
	<i>Communicating Change</i>	T.J Larkin	Winning Employee Support for New Business Goals
	<i>It Starts With One</i>	Black and Gregersen	Changing Individuals: changing organizations
Engagement	<i>First Break All the Rules</i>	Buckingham and Coffman	What the world's greatest managers do differently
	<i>Terms of Engagement</i>	Dick Axelrod	Changing the way we change organizations
Statistics and Analysis	<i>Statistics for Managers Using Microsoft Excel (Fifth Edition)</i>	Levine, Stephan, Krehbiel and Berenson	Using Microsoft Excel to perform all statistical tasks a manager is likely to encounter; extensive review of statistical concepts
	<i>Hard Facts, Dangerous Half-Truths & Total Nonsense, Profiting From Evidence-Based Management</i>	Pfeffer and Sutton	Why you should always question conventional wisdom. A model for thinking about problems and causal relationships.
	<i>Lean Six Sigma</i>	George	Combining Lean and Six Sigma in one book--what they mean and how to apply them.