



Running an executive roadshow

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John Clemens recently created an executive communication program designed to get leaders before audiences of 200 to 800 employees in locations across the US. Here he shares both the benefits and the logistical challenges of running an executive roadshow.

Employees need to hear from senior and executive leadership. Business leaders have realized that the connection they make with employees can yield benefits – in renewed credibility, dedication and trust. Additionally, opening a dialogue up, down and across, and organization gives employees the information they need to step up and help a company succeed.

Telling the company story

I recently created an executive communication program for a leading US-based wireless communication company. The objective: To get the company's president, chief operating officer, chief strategist and HR senior vice president before employee audiences ranging from 200 to 800 in locations throughout the US. To tell the company's story, each executive roadshow meeting required a script and a PowerPoint presentation outlining several key areas of the business such as annual operating strategy, market and competitive challenges, stock performance, financial update and sales report, and the "me" issues such as benefits, training and development and compensation. Each executive spoke from bulleted information compiled on a limited number of slides, followed by a question and answer period. The entire meeting last two and a half hours – uncomfortably long.

Initial evaluative results were positive but, after the first series of 22 meetings in the first year, it became apparent that fewer executives could deliver the information and cut the length of the meetings. The next series of meetings began with the president and the chief operating officer who proved to be so adept at delivering his portion of the presentation, the president subsequently bowed out. The COO revamped the bulleted messages and evolved them into a "living" presentation with more than 50 slides, using graphics to maintain employee interest and sharing additional information such as new advertising and marketing plans, competitive information, results of annual employee surveys and future growth plans. Employee feedback, during meetings and on the evaluation forms, prompted changes to the presentation, so every delivery was slightly different. The length of the presentation was reduced to an hour, with half an hour of employee questions. The roadshows became so popular with employees that regional executives requested the presentations. The program is still under way at the company and has become a solid component of the overall corporate internal communications strategy.

Logistics of employee meetings

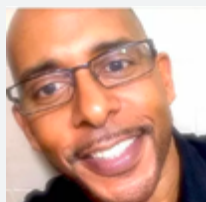
The critical logistical components of executive-employee meetings are:

- > Program format – time allotted for presentation, number of speakers and Q&A.
- > Presentation/script.
- > Meeting setup – seating, refreshments, audio visual equipment, staging, room temperature.
- > On-site support and assistance.

- > Template of employee invitation to meetings, with request for preliminary questions for executives.
- > Transportation to and from meeting locations.
- > Hotel arrangements as needed.
- > Briefing books including a minute-by-minute schedule, current presentation, blank pages for notes, details on the locations/office/employees visited and preliminary employee questions with suggested responses.
- > Presentation handouts (condensed or complete) for every employee.
- > Evaluation forms for each meeting.
- > Brief meeting report including evaluation results to executive presenter(s).

To maintain momentum and interest, also consider the following:

- > Post the presentation on the company intranet.
- > Spotlight the meetings in internal and electronic publications and video and audio programs to share news, build excitement and establish the program as part of an effective internal communications program.



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John is a global communications leader and advisor/consultant with award-winning record of success in corporate and organizational communications. Jon provides special expertise providing strategic counsel and support for top executives and corporate officers of Fortune 500 companies, preparing speeches and presentations, creating annual reports and authoring scripts, official correspondence, and corporate messaging. Working to establish standards and best practices and formulate corporate communication plans and programs his winning track record delivers measurable business results. John is the president of Clemons Communications, a communications consulting firm in Huntersville, NC.