

CASES IN PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY

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of cultural differences, building on that understanding appears to have been difficult. Further compromising program effectiveness was the power imbalance of participating members. My immediate supervisors in this project were high-ranking American staff. They had requested the chance to participate in group activities and in open communication sessions. I concurred with their wishes despite serious concerns. By placing American supervisors in open communication sessions with the very people they supervised, the openness of the communication sessions was likely compromised.

The lesson learned was quite clear—I had probably overpromised in my attempt to secure the contract for services. In both my heart and my head, I knew that such profound cultural differences were not going to be mitigated with audits, discussion sessions, and group activities. Yet I wanted the opportunity to participate in the program and, therefore, overstated the effectiveness of such activities to secure this opportunity for the State Department. Keeping client expectations reasonable, especially when you *really* want to work with a specific client, is a lesson that public relations practitioners should continue to reflect upon.

Ultimately, the key takeaway from working on a multinational public relations project is the need to be realistic about *time*. Cultural and logistical issues cannot be managed quickly or tidily. Organizations need to consider time and create clear expectations for all constituencies. Budgeting for time, and allowing for a more substantial period of adjustment, must be part of all international public relations activities.

TENNECO BUILDS EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT THROUGH RECOGNITION

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We live in a time when people are simply too busy—overwhelmed with work, gagging on data, and starving for information. We multitask while taking conference calls, race through emails, or use a text or voice message as our proxy when a face-to-face discussion is more important. Not surprisingly, in 2014, Tenneco Inc.—a company that designs, manufactures, and distributes products and technology solutions for cars, commercial trucks, and off-highway equipment—looked at employee survey results and found that employees were concerned about receiving recognition. Tenneco wanted to get a better understanding of employees' concerns. Over three months, it conducted focus groups with more than 1,000 front-line managers and hourly employees, and one-on-one interviews with 40 executive leaders and plant managers in 18 global locations in the Americas, Europe, and China (facilitators used a common discussion guide and led the interviews spoken in the native languages). In most locations, lack of employee recognition at all levels rose to the surface as a global theme, especially valuing employee contributions and acknowledging employees who go above and beyond the expectations of their jobs to deliver for their employer. Tenneco launched an employee communication campaign, called TEN10, that was designed to do the following:

- Create a unified global recognition program involving all Tenneco employees.
- Celebrate those who embody Tenneco's Shared Values.
- Incentivize performance and instill a sense of pride.
- Build the reputation internally for a credible, authentic program that could be sustained.

Kicked off in April 2015, with a total budget of approximately \$275,000, the campaign encouraged employees to nominate their coworkers for embodying one or more of Tenneco's 10 Shared Values. The "TEN10 Program Package"—a tool kit featuring an overview of the program, key messages, a timeline of activities, a PowerPoint presentation for leaders, a "frequently asked questions" guide, and communication templates for use in plants and offices—was distributed to senior leaders and managers. More than 7,000 nominations were submitted. Local leaders reviewed these nominations to identify 1,000 local winners for the first phase of recognition, who were honored during the global Month of Celebration held at approximately 100 plant and office locations in September 2015. During this month, facilities focused on Tenneco's growth, history, legacy, and shared values; the celebrations were publicized in the local communities through events held in plants and offices where employee nominees were recognized.

For the second phase of recognition, facility leaders selected an individual or team to represent their facility. Then, regional human resource directors reviewed the names to identify 60 semifinalists. Next, individual members of the Executive Strategy Group provided their recommendations for the top 10 winners, with the final decision made by Tenneco's chairman and CEO. These 10 individual winners, along with a top team winner, were unveiled on a global all-employee town hall webcast, and the winners were honored in their locations. As part of the celebration plan, the company's chairman and CEO then visited the work location of each of these honorees so as to recognize winners in front of their families and peers. The diverse group of winners included individuals from China, Spain, South Africa, Poland, Mexico, the United States, and India, ranging from front-line workers to managers.



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Tenneco employees recognized in India as part of the TEN10 campaign.

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