

THE VIRTUAL TOUR

What is the “Virtual Tour”?

The Virtual Tour is basically a series of online conversations with management and employees on strategic topics, hosted by the CEO, Board or senior management. Via online “chat sessions” executives reach out to all employees, not only sending information but also eliciting feedback and questions. A vital ingredient of the virtual tour is quantitative input, gathered through surveys and online polling.

When is it suitable?

A Virtual Tour is a good idea when you want to share strategic information – and are serious about getting people’s feedback on it.

What are the benefits?

In short, a much-increased chance of successfully implementing the strategy:

- Employees are more aware of the strategic direction – and their role in it
- Employees are more motivated to “do their bit” because they know what’s going on and why it is important – and because of the plain fact they are being *involved*
- Board and management are much more aware of barriers to execution – and the ways to overcome them
- HR and Communications gain essential information on how to maximize their support role

A recent McKinsey study (Global Survey January 2010, *What Successful Transformations Share*) shows that in three out of four extremely successful transformations, staff were enabled to contribute their thoughts and ideas to shape the company’s change initiatives.

Our experience

Some notable examples of companies we have supported in their strategic dialogue are:

- KPN (2009, 2010): virtual tour by the Board of Management, connecting the entire organization (30,000 people) around key strategic themes. Four online chats (1.5 hour each) with top-500 management and a 48-hour KPN1Chat with all employees.
- Scottish National Health Services (2009): online “Big Conversation” to help define values and behaviors. Started off with online chats among senior management, hosted by the Chief Executive, followed by a 36-hour online forum open to all 3,500 employees.
- TNT (2008): Online Strategy Jam to share information about the new strategic direction, allowing people to ask questions and share ideas, resulting in a multitude of ideas and a greater sense of solidarity between the divisions.

Our lessons-learned

Lesson no. 1: The topic of the dialogue needs to be *interesting to people*. Is it something that affects their lives, their work, their way of interacting with each other?

Lesson no. 2 (as a corollary to no. 1): It’s better to pick a couple of truly interesting chat topics than to try and capture the entire range of strategic topics.

Lesson no. 3: Before commencing the dialogue, plans need to be in place for follow-up communication and actions.

Lesson no. 4: A strategic dialogue can only be successful when leadership have a clear vision on how they want to use it - and they themselves are actively involved.

Check-questions

Are there one or more topics that are i) important to the organization, ii) relevant to most employees, iii) not yet fully implemented? And: Is the Board ready and willing to engage in dialogue, both asking and answering questions, and to follow-up on the resulting priorities?

Please contact us at +31(0)20 3050133 or contact@meyermonitor.com for more information.