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## Face-to-face contact will make it real

By Lou Solomon

Technology has made it easy for us to connect to global conversations. But what about connecting with the person in the next cubicle?

Organizations should value face-to-face communication for the following reasons:

- **It's a catalyst for action.** People adopt new ideas as a result of communicating directly with someone of influence.
- **It provides connectedness.** People don't thrive in a workplace that depends too much on e-mail and voice mail.
- **It promotes innovation.** Face-to-face conversation can be the most energizing part of the day.
- **It promotes understanding.** E-mail and voice-mail messages can be misconstrued because they are void of the body language and facial cues that complete communication.
- **It puts people in touch with each other.** Managers who communicate face-to-face with employees know what's going on.

Even though technology is woven into our lives, there are no shortcuts to effective communication. To increase the importance of face-to-face time in your company's culture, adopt these suggestions:

- **Get real.** At all-staff meetings, speak from the heart and tell people how the company is really doing by sharing the numbers.
- **Create a learning culture.** Invite speakers to your business and hold lunch-and-learn programs on topics of interest to your employees.
- **Solicit ideas.** Have employees submit ideas for bringing people together. Hold a pizza lunch the last Friday of the month. Schedule an occasional No In-House E-mail Day to encourage employees to communicate face-to-face.
- **Develop a speakers bureau.** Provide training to employees who are interested in speaking to associations or civic groups on behalf of your company cause or charity. There is no marketing tool more effective than having your people speak from the heart.
- **Be a good listener.** Set aside what you're doing, turn away from your computer and focus on the other person. Don't allow your meetings to be interrupted by phone calls or e-mails.

Build a culture that prizes face-to-face communication. No e-mail ever rocked the world or built a brand, but human beings do it every day.

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