Four Signs

that your organization needs internal localization and co-creation

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International companies often understand that to reach more customers, they need to localize and co-create.
Yet very few see a need to localize for their employees.

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Your company may be functioning well in English, but some markets may be showing warning signs that it's time to apply localization.

If you can identify any of these four common pain points, you'll be more equipped to start enabling content that is meaningful to local needs.

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1 Behaviors don't align with global strategy

Example:

In some markets, people are selling the wrong products to the wrong segments, or promoting services that the company is trying to discontinue.

Instead of focusing on growth markets, targeted products, or preferred customers, they're selling/ supporting what is lower-priority or has lower profitability.

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? Why is this happening?

Messaging on strategy isn't resonating, isn't getting through, or hasn't been shared in the right places. Local managers need to translate global strategy to their teams in ways that are meaningful, and discuss how it impacts team goals. These conversations need to happen on local terms, and maybe even in local language.
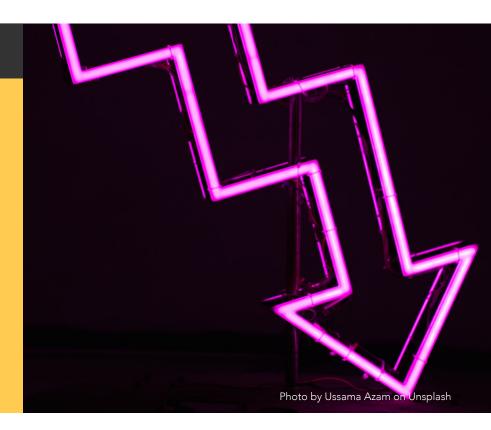
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2 Performance measures are on a downward trend

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Example:

Some markets are falling behind in key performance indicators (KPIs) that are strategically important to the company.

These could be related to safety performance, customer service, or product quality.

? *Why is this happening?*

Even if top executives are continually touting the importance of performance goals like safety, locally, people may be hearing competing messages. Maybe they're being told by supervisors that speed or cost are more important. Global priorities need to be understood locally, but in these areas, communication deliverables may not be having impact. Before you produce more stuff, look to cultural influences. If a KPI is important, make sure that the *what* and *why* resonates locally, and that it's in tune with what local managers are saying.

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3 Employees ignore compulsory training

Example:

Mandatory global trainings are typically about topics like IT security, anti-corruption or diversity and inclusion. People find them annoying and a waste of time, but they're important defense mechanisms to the company. If the compliance officers can show that most employees took a training, they can better satisfy insurers, regulators, and readers of their sustainability reports.

The goals for such training are two-fold. One goal may be to get employees to take the training. HR, Compliance, and/or Communications may find themselves chasing employee groups to complete it. Localization can make the training content more attractive and reduce the amount of nagging that needs to be done.

The second goal however, may be more important to some companies, and that's the outcome. Are the trainings reducing undesirable behavior? Are there still issues in some markets with sexual harassment or bribery?

Photo: Nathan Dumlao via Unsplash

? *Why is this happening?*

Employees in some locations are not getting it, and the lessons need to be explained to them in terms they can identify with. In central Europe for example, many see MeToo or BLM as "American issues." Racism and sexism are huge issues everywhere, but framing them in American terms isn't always convincing. The same may be true in some markets for bribing, harassing, and bullying.

If you're interested in the *outcomes* of training – i.e., actually reducing cases of harassment and bribery in markets with low compliance – then localizing the training content may be the answer. To be effective, training has to speak to their culture, and examples have to be identifiable and relevant.

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4 Global company content

Example:

According to IABC, 60 percent of companies don't measure internal use of their channels, but for those that do, international results are not pleasant. Employees outside of the home country often ignore global content, unless it's about changes in leadership, earnings, or breaking news like a response to a scandal. Enterprise social channels like Yammer or Workplace can also be low in international activity.

Photo: Mario Cuadros via Pexels

? *Why is this happening?*

Unless it's directly relevant to their jobs, or unless it's in a language they're naturally attracted to, people tune it out. Whether it's global news or postings on enterprise social, if the messaging of global content is a priority, than localization is a must.

Get leaders to play an active role in persuading employees to consume content. Behind the scenes, give them easily repurposed components that they can translate, share, repost, and comment on. As with all busy people, it has to be easy and fast or they'll ignore that too.

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None of these issues are going to be happening everywhere.

More likely, they happen in a few specific markets.

Whether you consider these issues to be relatively small or of strategic importance, the solution is to find local allies – and maybe professional communicators – who can help you root out the issues and apply tactics to address them.

Photo by Capturing the human heart. on Unsplash

*To learn more about how to assess your resources and capabilities in global internal communications, or to develop skills in local communicators, **contact me directly**.*

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About the author

Ray Walsh is an American communications consultant based in Prague. For 20 years he has managed and supported global clients in their employee communications, including UPS and DXC Technology. He is also the author of *Localizing Employee Communications: A Handbook* (available on Amazon). It's a practical guide to ending practices that inhibit reaching employees globally. He has worked in Germany, Belgium and the Czech Republic for more than half of his professional career.