



UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

CASE STUDY

Vision2Voice in partnership with Brand Clarity Strategic Marketing and Communications Inc.



VISION2VOICE



BRAND CLARITY

This project was led by Brand Clarity who contributed expertise in branding and deep knowledge of post-secondary institutions in Canada. The role of the Vision2Voice team was to bring specialized insight and knowledge in internal communications.

BACKGROUND

The University of Waterloo has earned a top spot among the best universities in the world. It attracts world-class scholars and is home to advanced research and teaching in science and engineering, mathematics and computer science, arts and social sciences. It is known for having the worlds' largest post-secondary cooperative education program and encouraging partnerships in learning, research, and communication. The university has more than 41,000 full and part-time students and about 4000 full-time staff, including faculty members.

As an organization, the University of Waterloo is a large, decentralized institution with complex organizational structures and multiple employee groups. Internal communication at the university was largely decentralized, with a focus on communication within academic departments and functional teams. This reflected the nature of the organization and the strong affinity of employees to their faculty or department. Communication from leadership including the university president was led by the president's office.

A central internal communications function had emerged as part of the university relations team. It operated several channels including a daily publication distributed by email and ad hoc mass emails delivered to the entire organization.

GOALS

The university relations team understood there was an opportunity to improve internal communication with a better understanding of the strategies, roles, and tactics that underpin an effective internal communication program. The Vision2Voice and Brand Clarity team understood there was an opportunity to develop a brand strategy from the inside out because it doesn't matter how much an organization invests in its external brand if the brand isn't lived and experienced on the inside by staff and faculty.



Evaluate the effectiveness of current strategies and tactics used to communicate with employees and faculty members.



Develop and articulate a framework or strategy for internal communications.



Identify gaps and make recommendations to improve current internal communications and close those gaps.

THE PROCESS

01

Interview senior leaders.

02

Conduct survey and focus groups.

03

Outlined findings in a detailed report.

04

Created a detailed 3-year roadmap.

Result

A clear plan for activating the university's brand from the inside out.

SOLUTION

To evaluate the effectiveness of internal communication at the University of Waterloo, Brand Clarity conducted an extensive internal communication audit. The audit included an analysis of the university's existing internal communications materials, a review of data related to the employee experience and employee engagement, one-on-one interviews with senior leaders, a detailed internal communications survey for staff, and focus groups with both senders and receivers of internal communication.

The analysis provided important insight into the opportunities for taking a more strategic and intentional approach to internal communication at the University of Waterloo. Through our research, we identified that there was a lack of deliberateness and strategy. We were able to identify nine gaps that prevented the internal communications function at the university from playing an important role in activating the brand and helping the university deliver on its strategic priorities. Our findings were informed by global internal communication best practices and deep expertise working with post-secondary institutions across Canada.

The next step was to develop a roadmap to move the internal function to a strategic level. In addition to making over 55 recommendations for closing the nine gaps that were identified, the roadmap presented a clear plan for a more deliberate and intentional communication designed to activate the University of Waterloo brand internally while building a positive employee experience. The payoff: a stronger and more authentic brand and employees that are better informed, supported, motivated, happy, and able to provide a great student experience.

"You provided us with a powerhouse of information and a clear roadmap for what happens next. Your work provided a real recognition of the value of internal communications and is already starting to pay off in conversations with the new president and at the most senior levels in the organization. Going forward, your work will be valuable in conversations related to refreshing the University of Waterloo's brand."

Nick Manning

Associate Vice President, Communications