



Using Business Principles to support ethical communication

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Introduction

In 1985, the first mobile phone call was made. It was on the Vodafone network. Vodafone is now one of the largest phone companies in the world. It has more than 15 million users in the UK alone. The market in which it works is high-tech. This means that it keeps changing. New products are needed to keep up with change. Vodafone must tell customers about the benefits of these products. It must communicate clearly. Customers will base their choices on what they are told. It is therefore vital that communications are clear and honest.

Channels of communication

This refers to the ways in which a message is passed. The two main ways are verbal (spoken) and non-verbal (written or visual). Clear communication is a process. A message must be sent, received and understood. Sometimes there are barriers in the process. For instance, jargon could be used. Vodafone works to reduce such barriers.

Talking to customers

Vodafone uses its own guidance to help it behave in a moral way. This is called being ethical. It has a set of ten Business Principles. One relates to how it communicates with customers. This is both verbal and non-verbal. Call centres and shops are the main place for verbal communication. Non-verbal includes what people see, such as the logo, and what they read. Vodafone needs to send a range of messages linked to:

- * promotion and sales. The message must be clear and open
- * information. For instance, Vodafone showed its support for the ban on mobile phone use whilst driving. It wrote clear guidelines
- * guidance. Some people still have concerns about mobile phones and health. Research is clearly explained without losing the sense of the science.

Talking to other stakeholders

Stakeholders are those with an interest in the business. These include shareholders, government and regulators. Vodafone needs to communicate with these key groups. Any message to a group must be written to target that group. There is a programme for each group to provide feedback. This means that the views of a group can be passed back to Vodafone. It can then act on these views. Sometimes it cannot carry out what is wanted. In this case, it promises to explain clearly why it cannot act on feedback. This is in line with its Principles.

Internal communications

These take place inside the business. They involve internal stakeholders. The main group is employees. Messages that are internal are passed:

- * vertically - down from top to bottom and back the other way
- * horizontally - across teams and people working at the same level. A key feature that helps smooth the process

is the intranet.

Conclusion

Vodafone has a range of Business Principles. These help it to act in an ethical or moral way. One of the key ones is related to communication. This must be clear and correct. This builds trust and loyalty. This in turn leads to greater profits.