

## Video “SOULutions” for Tough Economic Times

By Steve Mack

In troubled economic times employees are often more anxious and less productive. A September 2008 study by Workplace Options found that half of the employees surveyed say that the current economic uncertainty has caused them to be less productive at work. Recent research also shows that, in time of economic crisis, it is critical for employees to be able to see and hear their leaders.

Management needs to be talking directly with employees to address concerns, first and foremost. But what do you do when your employees are geographically dispersed and “walking the floor” isn’t an option? More companies are finding the answer is video.

### **The Video “SOULution”**

Video provides a unique medium for employee communications. Video allows executives to connect more visually and emotionally than a memo or email will allow. Video blogs, town hall meetings, company “news reels”, and training videos are all examples of how companies are using video to more effectively communicate with employees.

The critical element for success is the “SOULution”, or bearing the “SOUL” of your organization in order for employees to feel a greater connection. It’s about letting employees know they are important and respected in your messaging. And it’s about looking like you care when you communicate. That means cutting the corporate B.S. that people often see through. You’ve got to be brutally honest, show transparency in your organization, and avoid fluff at all costs.

Combining the Video and the “SOULution” provides a powerful tool to engage employees.

### **The Results**

Companies that are able to convey honesty, transparency and realism via video are finding success. Here are some examples of effective employee communication using video.

- When two of the world's largest steel manufacturers merged in 2006, Arcelor and Mittal used video extensively to address employee concerns about the new 320,000 person organization. A series of documentaries was created that openly addressed concerns about layoffs and the merger. The videos were widely viewed by employees, who "flooded" the corporate communications team with positive emails about the openness and honesty of the videos.

- Robert Scoble from Sun Microsystems has done several Video Blogs and gotten positive response across the company. Employees get to see their boss talking about new initiatives and interacting with other employees. These are very basic video productions – Robert is walking around, talking to the camera, and explaining how several programs work. It's not heavily polished and that's the point, to have the executive talking in plain English.

- When a crisis hits, a scripted Video Address can provide a medium to tackle an issue in a more visible and personable manner. KFC President Gregg Dedrick recently used an online video to address some bad press that the company had recently gotten. Video messages like these are purposely more scripted than a video blog, due to the more serious issues they discuss, but need to be just as honest and real in their delivery.

Even if you don't use video, make sure that management is getting out there and communicating with employees with real openness. The addition of video can provide a powerful medium to engage employees and reinforce your message.

**About the author:**

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