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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to *discuss the role of internal communication in an acquisition and assess its effects on employees' work satisfaction*. The research problem was handled through the sub-problems of (1) *how the company communicates to its employees in different phases of an acquisition*; (2) *how employees experience internal communication in different phases of an acquisition*; (3) *how employees' previous experience on acquisitions affects their experiences on the current acquisition*; (4) *how internal communication in an acquisition affects employees' work satisfaction*. The research was conducted as a case study in an international sanitation company, JohnsonDiversey, which was formed in 2002 when Johnson Wax Professional acquired DiverseyLever. Both qualitative interviews and a quantitative survey were conducted for the study's purposes.

The acquisition process in the case company consisted of three phases: pre-combination, combination and post-combination stages. The company communicated most during the pre-combination stage when it announced the deal, explained the rationale behind it and reassured the employees about the deal's opportunities. In combination phase the communication started with introducing the new company goals and employee positions in the organization and continued with addressing concrete acquisition outcomes. The post-combination stage still continues and engages mostly with encouraging employees to adopt the new company procedures and identity.

Employees were mostly satisfied with the company communications and believed the management to have communicated everything it was entitled to communicate and as soon as possible. They still felt that communication should have started earlier, already when the first rumours started and could have been more up-to-date and open. Communication was perceived to calm down uncertainties and help to cope with the changes. It was also reported to positively correlating with work satisfaction. However, depending on the situation communication can also be related to work dissatisfaction if the content and the amount of the communication are perceived lacking.

The study results indicate that previous acquisition experience defines somewhat the expectations set for the next one, either realistic or unrealistic depending how similar the two acquisitions are. The experience is likely to help employees to anticipate changes and cope with them. Also the acquisition activity presented in the media was perceived to calm down the uncertainties the acquisition announcement always creates.

Key words	Acquisition, communication, work satisfaction, experience
Further information	