

>> **Why wait at the negotiating tables to get the ball rolling with the communication process that is so integral to building confidence?**

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The relationships between companies and unions could quite possibly be a real case of teamwork which favours sustainable development of organizations and human resources. However, this opportunity has been underexploited seeing as how competition comes before cooperation, short term before long term and transaction before the relationship.

Despite the fact that organizations and unions may have substantial differences in regards to their ideas and political interests, they may also have similar purposes, and through that, similar objectives. Some examples include employment growth, improvement of quality of life for employees and the existence of decent working conditions. These common interests can give way to decisive transformations. However, one wonders why this occurs in so few cases.

The absence of recurrent spaces for collective and collaborative effort and the concentration of the most important definitions in one single space —collective bargaining— are determining factors in the communication between companies and unions.

In order to develop work relations focused on cooperation, a communication process which facilitates the interaction

between players, both individually and collectively, and which changes competition and rivalry into open dialogue, scarcity into abundance and win-lose into win-win is fundamental. This virtuous evolution, in turn, will result in sustainable relationships based on trust and collaboration, thus increasing value for all stakeholders, which is ultimately the essence of every organization, regardless of their activity or affiliation.

Accurate, clear, timely, continuous and two-way communication facilitates understanding between all parties and will help in the development of honest and lasting bonds.

It is a question of generating spaces where all parties can forget about assuming what or how the other thinks, and instead, are without a doubt, clear, at all times of what is going on, thus reducing and even eliminating the uncertainty that arises from misinformation: regarding labour relations management, communication is a facilitator which incites positivity and motivation, concentration, excellent performance, productivity and integration.

In collective bargaining, communication has a unique and special relevance, considering it is one of the fundamental pillars in achieving and maintaining a successful partnership. The communication strategy should be, from start to finish, complete, integral and mainstreamed (for its core audiences).

This completeness relies on the fact that the process be permanent and not a one-time thing. Today, it is common to contemplate the phases of preparation, development, evaluation and follow-up of collective bargaining, but once a deal has been closed, its validity expired, daily life once again consumes the communication process and each party goes their own way until the next deal's date comes up on the calendar. Each party goes about their daily business and easily forgets that a good partnership must be nurtured in this frantic world.

Mainstreaming refers to the adequate coverage of a company's stakeholders, shareholders, clients, employees, suppliers, authorities, public opinion and general community. The integration and mainstreaming strategy should be accompanied by the appropriate use and articulation of available media, taking



advantage of the benefits of electronic media, for example.

Two groups deserve special consideration in this approach: the customers and the employees.

The customers could benefit from knowing what influences collective bargaining has over them and to be aware of its progress, which would generate a positive perception of the relationship with the company and how said company is committed to offering them quality service as well as including them in the organization's milestones. Fluid communication with the clients during the negotiation process could easily deepen and strengthen the relationship, satisfaction and loyalty to the company.

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Regarding the collaborators, during collective bargaining, company communication determines, for good or for evil, the attitude and behaviour in dealing with the process, the company and its leaders, either deepening or undermining the credibility and corporate reputation, both of which are its principal assets. Although the collective contract is signed with the union, it is based on a foundation, and in order to nurture it successful, it needs pro-activity, inclusion and continuity in the communication.

The communication strategy is most definitely the trigger that can instigate the virtuous cycle that is necessary in order to motivate progress in labour relations which will consequently lead to the betterment of society.



>> **Jairo Burgos de la Espriella.** Director of Talento & Talante and Consulting Partner at Liderazgo & Transformación Consultores. With over 25 years of experience, this Colombian lawyer specializes in Company and Labour law at the same university; "Master in Science of Management" of Arthur Little School of Management in Boston and has a Masters Degree in Business Administration and Public Policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Before establishing his own firm, he was Human Resources Vice president at Bancolombia and Human Resources manager at Banco Industrial Colombiano.



>> **María Esteve.** General Director at LLORENTE & CUENCA Colombia. Social Communicator of the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. She has extensive experience in the areas of Crisis Communication and Public Affairs as a result of her career path in various media firms and private companies. She joined LLORENTE & CUENCA in July, 2013 after having worked in Corporate Communications at CorpBanca for two years. She started her career at Dattis Consultants and after 10 years, achieved the position of Consulting Partner, managing clients such as Ecopetrol, BBVA, Telefónica y Gómez-Pinzón Zuleta to name a few.

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