



- 120 WELLS AVENUE
NEWTON, MA 02459

Inward Strategic Consulting Celebrates its Eighth Anniversary: Reflections on Eight Change-full Years

Eight years! That's how long Inward Strategic Consulting has been in business. We started Inward with the belief that we knew a better way to establish brands and messaging—a better way to win internal acceptance and buy-in to major change initiatives—a better way to build team alignment in support of business initiatives.

We designed our methodologies to be inclusive, participative, and facilitative. Our vision was to create abundant mentalities and inspire people to commit to and engage with critical strategic business initiatives. Whether companies were installing new technology, launching or repositioning a brand, integrating after a merger, or strategically redirecting themselves the problems and solutions were similar: We believed they could save money and time and rise higher by getting everyone on board early in the process of change. Now in eight short years business in all areas of branding (internal and external), change management, and team alignment, even market research has been transformed, and our vision is more relevant than ever.

The Current Paradigm

Mass advertising and public relations have been pre-empted by one-to-one marketing campaigns delivered with devastating accuracy to computer screens. We are exposed to new terminology such as *search engine optimization*, *click through*, *banner advertising*, and *buzz marketing*. In the consumer marketing arena marketing clout has shifted from the manufacturer to the retailer, who now calls the shots on co-marketing funding and joint promotional marketing plans. Today big box retailers like Wal-Mart, Staples Home Depot and Costco control the channels and marketing resources that used to be in the hands of big brands and their agencies.

Today, retailers and manufactures alike are hiring boutique marketing companies and web-enabled promotional marketing firms to come up with cross functional/cross branded programs that build on the lifetime value of the customer, rather than one-time coupon redemption programs or rebates. It is about creating customer experiences and value and no longer about reaching mass markets with image advertising. The key drivers of this change are information technology, inventiveness, improved customer relationship management ideas/software and improved analytics talent and skills. Think of the \$1.6 billion acquisition of YouTube by Google!

All the change in traditional branding is changing the traditional models of marketing too. Do you really need a big traditional ad agency? Is your company taking full advantage of technology that provides greater relevancy to the end customer? If you want to see what I mean, go and download a version of Monk-e-Mail, which an affiliate of ours, Oddcast.com, produced. Ask yourself: Is your marketing truly a “new technology enabled integrated personalized” marketing strategy that goes from mass to one with an appropriate message at every point of contact?

Internal Branding – Selling Inside To Sell Outside

Internal branding has seen significant changes too. First of all, the names have changed, from *internal communications* to *employee engagement* and from *corporate communications people* to *internal branding professionals*. We have gone from providing tactics and specific deliverables, to enabling a process that hatches change of enterprise behaviors. Internal communication was once factual, HR driven, formal and instructional. Today it has become informal, and is based in dialogue, community building, and two-way communications, and it's about advocacy not control. We now see more experiential communications; face-to-face participation and engagement by senior leaders and staff; and less use of one-message-fits-all tactics, like company memos to staff and newsletters. Avatars on Intranets and self-directed online training materials have pushed them out. The new internal strategic plans are managed not by Sales or HR but by marketing communications professionals, with clout and real budgets, who are strategic advisors to management. They are program managers and they enable sustained behavior change.

Effective Team Alignment = 20% Gain in Shareholder Value

As to team alignment, with the start of baby boom retirements, we are seeing new business interactions and boardroom politics. Hierarchical "do what I say" management styles are replaced with collaborative abundant mentalities and enabled workforce ideas, promoted by MIT professor Peter Senge in *The Fifth Discipline* and by PR icon Larry Webber in *The Provocateur*. Senge and Webber argued that in the world of technology enablement and real time communications, more can be attained through collaboration and consensus than by small groups in silos. I have seen this happen now with many of my clients, who work hard to win over other groups within their companies: Their planning and project management include joint cross functional goals and deliverables; their teams are embracing group rather than individual incentives; and more effective and frequent communications use all forms of media. It's about execution: The challenge is to stay on track, to move fast, and not to waste time.

Building corporate alignment and consensus among teams/groups requires authority from management. After that everything comes down to effective project management and accountability, recognition, and rewarding your team. The results are huge: According to a recent Watson Wyatt study, effective alignment and communications can impact shareholder value by as much as 19.5%. This is significant money.

Research as we know it will never be the same.

Traditionally marketing and communications have relied on qualitative focus groups and in-depth one on one interviews and ethnographic studies. While these techniques certainly provide good insights and understanding, they could never be representative of broader populations and marketplace trends. In many instances they were abused as an easy inexpensive way to conduct research. In some circles at client organizations, qualitative techniques were done in multiple numbers and markets. That was then.

Now research still relies on qualitative, but augmented by technological advances and low cost that allow more analytical study, multivariate analysis conducted on line through the Internet with panel respondents, and VOIP telephone technology and off-shore call center operations. Today, we can have a real-time, live focus group of people from around the world reacting to stimuli like ads, and commenting and completing forms on-line. Meanwhile the clients, who formally sat behind one way mirrors, observe on-line with real-time feedback of findings, and still have the opportunity to provide additional input – all remotely from the comfort of their office chairs in front of their computer screens.

Many companies are now getting their feet wet in conducting their own research, employing easy-to-use interactive research tools that allow management to do studies and display quantitative findings in days instead of weeks or months, for a negligible monthly subscription fee (\$35.00). The help of outside research firms like ours focuses increasingly on planning and interpretation, and less on project management and writing reports. Research is still critically important—but now technology and research automation has given it more speed, effectiveness and improved representation and coverage.

We can help you navigate all this dynamic and positive change. We can assist your marketing, branding, internal teams and research transition to take full advantage of all that the new world of technology, empowerment and effectiveness can provide.

Eight years! We have been fortunate to witness the growth of our company and see how our ideas and approach have helped our clients' businesses as the market evolved around us. We want to thank all our clients, large and small, like Sapient (our first client), Pitney Bowes, Fidelity Investments, Campbell Soup, Citadel Security Software, McKinsey, Patni, Black Diamond Software, TripAdvisor, DayJet, Unique Doors/Bass Brothers, TMP/Monster and many more who helped us along the way. We want to thank the various affiliates and partners we have worked with over the years, who have provided great creative support and been so generous with their time; these companies include Halleck Design, Calise & Sedei, ITSMA, Outlook Marketing/PR, Oddcast, Western Watts, E-Rewards and many more. Thank you!