

## PROTECTING BRAND THROUGH CHANGE - the emerging threat from Social Media -

During 2012 a phenomenon surfaced in New Zealand and Australia, namely an emerging business issue relating to the risk social media was posing to corporate brand through disaffected employees post-redundancy. At that time in the UK we were not seeing this phenomenon and as such were a little sceptical that this would be an issue in our geography. We are however very aware of the positive effect that quality career transition programmes can play in minimising this risk by supporting employees through the redundancy process.

Post 2012 we have seen a steady escalation in risk as employees embrace social media in a rapidly developing manner. As such the opportunity to publish damaging and inappropriate comment on the run up to and post departure is an increasing and significant risk. This is placing a growing emphasis on how employers manage change in this digital era.

When change leads to redundancy business risk increases significantly, those employees who face retrenchment will have strong opinions on how the process was managed. As part of the natural process of loss many will look to criticise or blame and seek out others who will share this viewpoint. Enter social media – replacing yesterday’s ‘word of mouth’! Today social media allows a disgruntled employee to communicate immediately, globally and irreversibly.

Research from Convergys Corporation, a leading Customer Management business, found that one negative blog posted by a disgruntled employee or those close to them can result in the loss of 30 customers. In the UK we saw evidence of this some months ago during the difficult trading position at HMV, a leading retailer, which triggered a raft of negative commentary, even from junior HR employees!

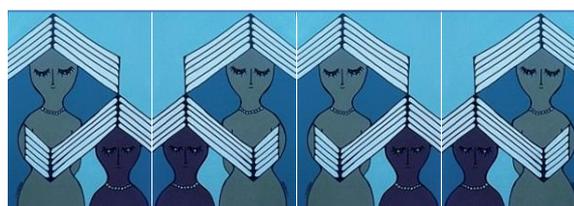
So what is the connection between Brand Equity and Change Management and where does career transition add value? At the heart of brand protection lies trust and how an organisation treats its employees through difficult times. The ability of the employer to ‘walk the talk’ through periods of change will go a long way to enhancing (or conversely compromising) the brand from a perception perspective.



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THROUGH CHANGE’**

The January ACF Europe Newsletter  
will feature an article by  
Herbert Mühlenhoff  
(Managing Partner at Mühlenhoff +  
Partner GmbH and  
Board Member of ACF Europe)



continuation

The introduction of prudent interventions at the start of the change process to provide appropriate support for affected employees is now a critical element in reducing the desire of an employee to focus on the negative. Critically as career professionals we also need to focus on the potentially damaging effects that negative comments can make to an employee's personal brand and with it the chance of securing good new roles moving forward. Early interventions ensure that any social media output is both controlled and targeted and avoids potentially damaging consequences for all.

Why did this issue surface and become prevalent in New Zealand? – almost certainly because NZ is such a small market and as such the effects were felt more keenly. The continuing exponential growth of social media has ensured that all markets feel so much smaller and more intimate than they ever have before. As a result the opportunity for us as career professionals to support our clients to create a positive change environment has never been more relevant.

### **Henry Armstrong**

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ACF logo and website

ACF Europe would very much appreciate if our members would publish the ACF Europe logo on their website



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and a link to

[www.acf-europe.org](http://www.acf-europe.org)

### **Christmas message from the President**

As the year draws towards a close and we start to plan for the Christmas holidays with friends and family it is a timely reminder for us to think back on the year.

As an industry we have much to be proud of. In the recession, which many countries across Europe are now starting to climb out from, we have worked with many thousands of people who found themselves without jobs because of economic circumstances. As outplacement professionals we have been responsible for helping people see their strengths amidst this turmoil, to grow in confidence and to find jobs again or indeed to start new businesses. We have played a major part in helping people go back into work even stronger and more resilient to change.

I am very proud to be associated with this industry because of the great and valuable work we do and the professionalism displayed throughout our ACF membership.

The Board of the ACF wish you, your colleagues and your families a very peaceful and happy Christmas and New Year.

**Bev White**

**President ACF Europe**



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