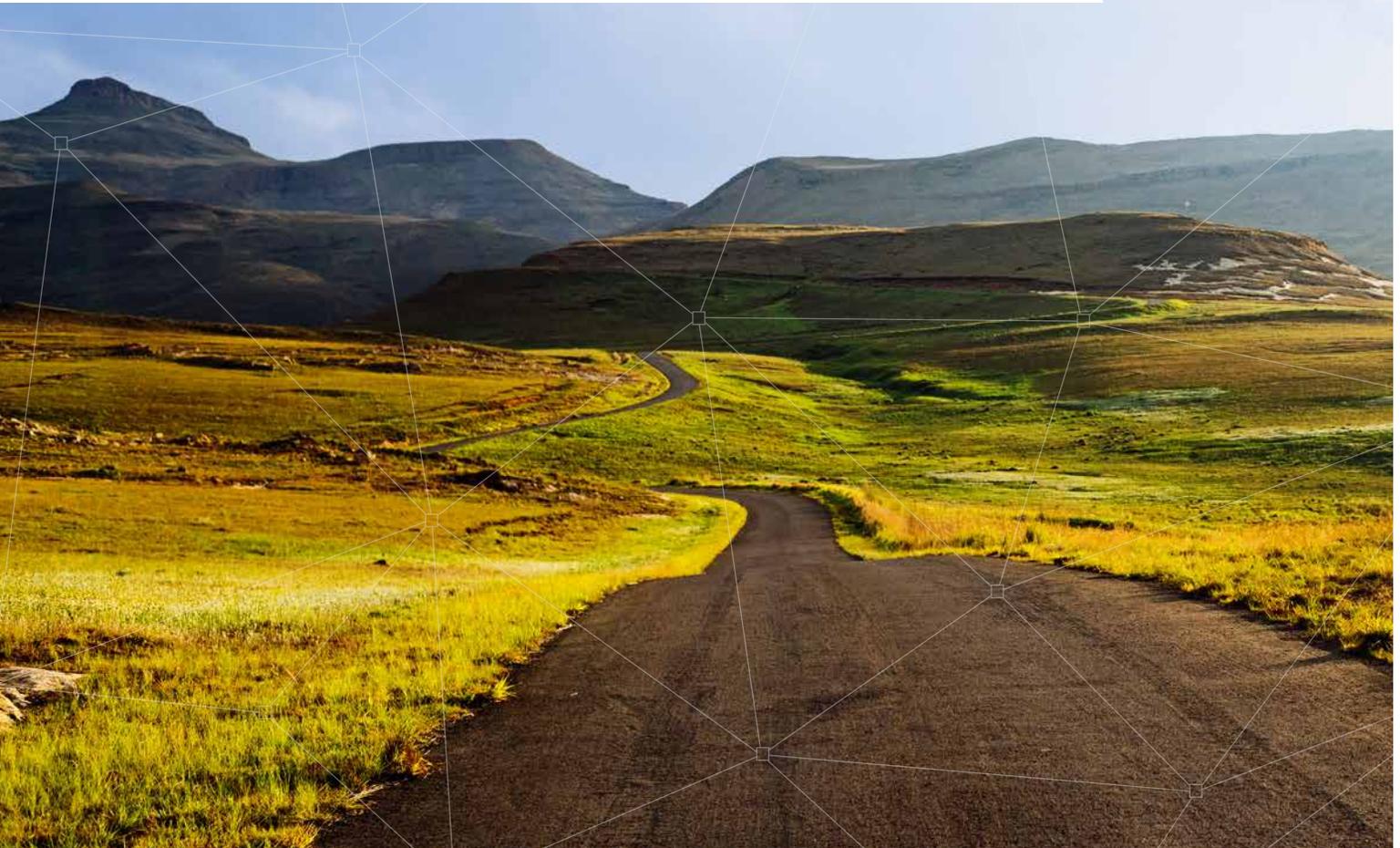


M&A Integration ... a (Communication) Journey, Not a Destination.

Anyone who has been part of an M&A transaction understands the critical nature dates and specific events play in the process. There's the letter of intent, the deal close date, public announcement and of course Day 1 — the day these separate companies begin the journey of becoming a single, high-performing operating entity.

All these dates are critical. However, C-suite executives need to be reminded that Day 1 is not the finish line. It's just the starting line. Day 1 is the first of many days the executive team must manage effectively to maximize the return on their M&A investment.



BY: JAMES O'GARA



With that said, it's easy for the C-suite to get tunnel vision around dates and events leading up to Day 1 ... and lose sight of intentional and disciplined communication required to fully integrate two newly combined companies.

Executives often are consumed with closing the deal and then quickly hand off the rest of the journey to leaders across the organization. As a C-suite executive, what you must remember is that those leaders who are taking the handoff had day jobs before the transaction was announced. They were focused on running the existing business. The transaction brings a whole new set of integration communication responsibilities that someone (more likely a team) must own.

M&A integration communication begins the day a letter of intent is signed and continues for 12-18 months post Day 1.

- > Who owns the integration messaging strategy that will guide the story inside and outside the organization?
- > Who owns the communications plan?
- > What about week-to-week execution of internal and external communication programs?

“Successful integration communication strategies require a full-court press on these and other fronts. Not the haphazard, “we will get to it later or when we have the time,” effort and attention many companies unknowingly apply in these areas.”

Most executive teams fail to reap maximum value from a merger or acquisition because they “short” the integration communication process.

They make too many assumptions that stakeholders understand how this is supposed to work and what is expected of them. They underestimate the communication that is required to bring two cultures together. They underinvest in the disciplined and intentional communication that employees, partners and customers demand throughout the journey.



Executives who have been part of M&A transactions without a clear messaging and communications strategy have learned this the hard way.

They have experienced firsthand the chaos and confusion that takes root when a disciplined communication strategy is not executed up and down the organization.

To avoid these negative consequences, the C-suite must elevate the critical importance of communication. They must play an active role in shaping the story that will be pulled through the organization and customer experience post announcement date. These executives recognize that while HR, communications, marketing and other leaders have a role to play — a dedicated, experienced M&A integration communication team (with the expertise, processes and tools to fully integrate the companies over a defined period of time) is absolutely required for success. They value experts who have been through dozens of M&A transactions and bring the structure, strategy and tools required to drive effective integration communication ... inside and outside of the organization.

Are you currently planning a merger or acquisition?

Get in front of the communication requirements. Create a sustained plan of attack.

Are you experiencing chaos and confusion post-transaction?

It's not too late. Formulate a clear, consistent integration story. Build and start executing a disciplined communication plan.

In the end, it doesn't matter when you recognize the critical role integration communication plays in M&A success. It's just vital that you do. And then ... do something about it.

OnMessage has more than 50 years of hands-on M&A integration experience across 75+ transactions and has helped executive teams successfully fulfill vital integration communication requirements. To learn more, visit www.itsonmessage.com.



onmessage^x

itsonmessage.com