

ANNE KLEIN COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

Creating a Positive Climate for Organizational Change

One in a Series of Award-Winning Solutions

The Challenge:

Properly and appropriately communicate a major divestiture to all affected constituencies of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries.

Results:

- The CEO said the announcement would become a model for all future Diakon announcements.
- The media coverage was light and generally neutral, exactly what we had hoped for.
- Employee reaction to the CEO visits was overwhelmingly positive, with many appreciative comments made to the CEO and executive directors.
- The communications materials were complete and compelling; all recipients readily grasped the need and rationale for the move Diakon was making.
- The true success of this campaign is what did not happen: no negative headlines or letters to the editor; no resistance among the Lutheran hierarchy; no exodus of residents from the facilities sold or retained by Diakon; no employees quit their jobs.
- Diakon was able to effect a major change and pave the way for future growth.

Background:

Anne Klein Communications Group reviewed media coverage of previous announcements to discern what preconceptions the media may have had about Diakon. Through primary quantitative research, AKCG gathered empirical data about employee attitudes toward management. We learned employees at sites in play were expecting action and were psychologically ready.

The Campaign:

The primary goals of the campaign were to ensure that all affected audiences received information about the divestiture directly from Diakon; minimize media coverage and mitigate potential negative coverage; and promote and reinforce positive relationships with retained employees.

Using the research, AKCG developed an action plan and provided Diakon with communications advice and counsel from writing standby statements, to reviewing the terms and conditions of the sale, to planning and executing the actual announcement.

As the date of the announcement drew nearer, AKCG wrote a wide array of communications materials that were audience-specific: employees, residents and families, volunteers, donors, clergy, local influentials, the news media and government officials. Diakon conducted meetings to inform internal audiences, the news release was distributed, the mailshop sent 18,000 letters to second-tier constituents and the “dark” Web site with divestiture details went live. The Diakon CEO visited each of the affected facilities over a period of three days, using the travel time to contact key influentials on his call-out list. Follow-up communications included a special employee newsletter and emails responding to questions or concerns brought to management’s attention.

To learn more about how Anne Klein Communications Group can help your organization successfully navigate corporate reorganization, please call and ask for Anne Klein or John Moscatelli.