

ALLSTATE IS AN 86-YEAR OLD PROPERTY AND casualty insurance company that defies the industry's staid and conservative image. When an Allstate commercial appears on television, viewers typically stay in their seats to watch the ludicrous and humorous "Mayhem." What may not be so clear to the public is that Allstate is similarly determined to engage and energize its 35,000-plus workforce. For Lisa Aronson, Director of Enterprise Communications at Allstate, it's all part of the company's commitment to put people first.

Allstate regularly lands on lists of the best places to work. All employees have access to health programs so that they can bring their best selves to the workplace while fulfilling a personal purpose. The average tenure of employees is nearly 12 years. As Aronson points out, "your customer experience is only as good as your employee experience."

There are several tenets that guide Allstate's mission to thrive into the 22nd century. Four of them explicitly concern employees:

1 Ensuring employee alignment from the outset. "People should work at Allstate because they feel like their personal purpose is so closely aligned with Allstate's purpose that Allstate becomes the canvas for them to do what they love to do," Aronson says. Energy for Life, a physical and mental well-being program that Chief Executive Tom Wilson brought back to the company from a leadership retreat, helps employees do just this. Employees who participate in the program can go through an exercise that guides them toward finding their personal purpose, helping them to assign meaning to the work that they do.

2 Empowering employees to communicate confidently. It is no secret that insurance customers are more than willing to air their grievances with the claims process. This, together with the industry's high levels of regulation, means that Allstate's enterprise communications team must make sure employees are well-versed in knowing if, when, and how to engage with customers and the general public. And as Aronson points out, they need to be doing this "all while inspiring pride and advocacy."

Allstate has found unexpected ways to keep their content engaging for employees. They now have their own in-house creative agency, Allstate Multimedia, with versatile, world-class production facilities producing video, photography, graphic/

animation and live streaming content. Allstate's production studio handled over 500 projects in 2016 and is already well over that number in 2017 – projects that support more than 20 business units in the company that are focused on communicating company strategy, reputation and/or culture to internal and external audiences.

3 Enabling passionate brand ambassadors. Formalizing an "employee ambassador program" has been a way for Allstate to cultivate thousands of brand advocates. The Allstate Ambassador Program was born out of the recognition that reputation is the most valuable intangible asset that Allstate owns, and that employees are central to reinforcing positive perceptions of the company. It was launched in 2009 and now has a total of 7,750 participants – or over 20 percent of Allstate's overall workforce. Ambassadors, who all self-identify and self-register, receive updates on products and services on a regular basis and are tapped to help test or weigh-in on products ahead of time. The sneak peeks are an

Allstate's **LISA ARONSON** tells Brunswick's **CHRISTOPHER HANNEGAN** and **KAYLAN NORMANDEAU** how the company engages its 35,000-plus employees

The GOOD

incentive for participation in the program and serve to get them up-to-speed on Allstate's latest offerings.

Allstate also builds employee advocates through social media sharing. Aronson and her team noticed that employees were holding back from talking about Allstate on social media because of the fear that their posts would breach regulatory lines. So, the Good to Know program was created to provide approved social media content that individuals can share via their personal social media accounts.

4 Attracting future talent. So how does Allstate combat the image of a staid, conservative insurance company and convince potential hires that they need to be a part of a company that is reinventing protection and retirement? As Aronson says, "it comes down to reinforcing who Allstate is and how we do things, not the products and services."

For example, you won't find titles or tenure stats in the testimonials Allstate uses in their recruiting

videos. Instead, they focus on who the people are (for example, a “marketing diva and passionate volunteer,” or, “tech guru and art collector”) and why they feel connected to Allstate. This allows the company to take the spotlight off any type of hierarchy and keep the culture at the core of what they do and how they talk about themselves.

The company also accepts the realities of a changing workplace, especially when it comes to meeting Millennials’ expectations. It has taken steps to allow flexible work schedules, and recently started going where the talent is, with an office in downtown Chicago in addition to its headquarters in suburban Northbrook, about 30 miles outside of the city. Allstate attracts employees of all ages, with a comparable number of Millennials to Generation X.

While these four points center explicitly on employees, two other tenets affect them implicitly. The first is that Tom Wilson leads by example. Wilson, says Aronson, is convinced that providing first-class service and products to customers begins with the premise that “everyone at Allstate is in it

together.” For him, it is more important for Allstate to focus on being a “force for good” than to focus on what they sell.

A final guiding principle involves holding leaders accountable. For employees, 50 percent of their performance is tied to Allstate’s six Leadership Principles: we’re here to serve, we win together, we drive results, we’re transparent, we continuously get better and we develop each other.

Embedding the principles into performance review criteria means that the words championed by the company don’t sit hidden in an intranet, but are rather talked about and taken seriously.

“There is no better way to get people aware of what the Leadership Principles are and the behaviors that are expected of them than to grade their paper on it,” says Aronson.

CHRISTOPHER HANNEGAN, a Partner, leads Brunswick’s global Employee Engagement offer. He is based in the firm’s Chicago office. **KAYLAN NORMANDEAU** is an Associate with Brunswick Insight based in New York. Additional reporting by **TANYA ROSENBLUT**, an Account Director in New York.

LISA ARONSON

Lisa Aronson is Director of Enterprise Communication at Allstate, a position she has held since 2014. She was previously Senior Manager of Integrated Social Media and Culture in Allstate’s Enterprise Communications team.

HANDS employer



The Allstate Multimedia agency produced more than 500 projects in 2016 for internal and external audiences.