From Infrastructure to Conversation: A Case Study on Veitur's Rebrand and Stakeholder-Led Communication Strategy

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Introduction

This case study examines how Veitur made public dialogue and stakeholder engagement a core pillar of its rebranding effort and geothermal project development. In a context where the success of geothermal deployment increasingly depends on social acceptance, trust, and transparency, Veitur recognized the need to move beyond technical excellence and toward cultural awareness and communicative fluency.

The study offers practical insights for utilities and geothermal developers—specifically, how to embed stakeholder engagement into daily operations, reshape organizational culture, and treat communication not as a secondary task but as essential infrastructure for maintaining a social license to operate.

1. We Needed to Change

Veitur Utilities is the biggest utility company in Iceland. Our strategy is to be proactive in developing sustainable solutions with community success as our guiding principle. Veitur provides essential services—hot water, electricity, clean drinking water, and wastewater systems—forming the backbone of society. To meet rapidly growing demand, major

investments and extensive construction will be required in the coming years. Although we operate under an exclusive license, public trust, municipal cooperation, and stakeholder buy-in remain critical.

To achieve this, we must stay attuned to our customers and all stakeholders. People must want to collaborate with us, trust us, and support the major projects required as the utilities sector continues its rapid transformation.

We set an ambitious strategy in 2023—but did people perceive us as a forward-thinking, modern service organisation? Not really. Our communication had become preachy, outdated, and overly cautious. We were not connecting. So we decided to change.

2. What We Did

We began by gathering meaningful insights into public perceptions. Through stakeholder analysis, interviews, brand audits, and engagement with customers, businesses, institutions, and employees, we confirmed what we suspected: everyone knew Veitur, but few understood what we do, and many perceived us as old-fashioned or rigid.

Key findings highlighted the need for: 1. Stronger customer service focus. 2. Improved communication and marketing. 3. Greater proactivity and confidence. 4. A consistent, warm, and emotionally resonant narrative.

Being consistent means sticking to simple, clear messages that show what we contribute to society every single day.

3. Rebranding as a Driver of Cultural Transformation

A crucial outcome of the rebrand was the internal cultural shift it initiated. For decades, Veitur's organisational identity had been shaped by its technical heritage—thinking in terms of assets, pipelines, cables, and engineering performance. While this remains essential to our mission, it limited how we conceptualised our societal role and how we understood the lived experience of those who rely on our services.

The rebrand reframed *connection* as a central organising principle, not only in communication but in daily decision-making. This encouraged a transition from an inward-looking, technology-led perspective toward a more relational, reflective, and customer-responsive culture. Across departments, employees increasingly began interpreting their work through the lens of customer needs, expectations, and social context.

This cultural shift strengthened organisational cohesion and reinforced the understanding that sustainable utility management requires continuous alignment between technical excellence and the everyday realities of the communities we serve. In this way, the rebrand did not simply modernise Veitur's external image—it fundamentally reshaped how we think, collaborate, and connect. It has also strengthened employee satisfaction by giving teams a clearer sense of purpose, improving cross-departmental understanding, and fostering a culture where contribution to customer value is visible and shared.

4. When We Are Connected

This analysis became the foundation for a company-wide communication and engagement strategy designed not just to provide information, but to build long-term partnerships. The strategy is expressed through the theme: *When we are connected*.

We shifted from technical language to shared, emotionally resonant narratives—reminding people of the human value behind infrastructure. A new manifesto and tone of voice emphasised warmth, clarity, curiosity, and positive public dialogue.

Key changes included: - A new manifesto expressing our role in connecting communities. - Moving from lecturing to inspiring, from apologetic to informative. - Using customer touchpoints during repairs and disruptions to explain purpose and societal benefits. - Strengthening engagement with municipalities, developers, and the public. - Integrating ESG and socio-economic considerations into project planning. - Training staff to serve as community listeners and ambassadors, not only technical experts.

5. Conclusion

The transformation began with understanding expectations, concerns, influence, and trust across customers, municipalities, citizens, partners, and regulatory bodies. This stakeholder analysis became the blueprint for a company-wide strategy designed not only to inform but to build enduring partnerships, strengthen customer satisfaction, and reinforce Veitur's social license to operate.