

# Examples of internal communication approaches



Employee Engagement and Internal Communications specialists

Top down or bottom up ~ formal or informal there are lots of ways and means to create effective communication within an organisation. Let's explore some of the ways and means. The two channels are often described as the formal and informal channels of internal communication.

## Communication ways and means

### Formal channels

These range from; intranets, e-mail, newsletters, periodic presentations by the Boss, Open House or Town Hall Sessions and even good old Team Briefings or Staff Magazines, Notices and Posters. All can form part of the mix of internal communications.

What about the famous internal memo or memorandum to give it the official title. It is a short brief message to another member of the same organisation. Typically such memos today are sent by e-mail.

### Informal Channels

While formal channels are important, it is vital for senior management to make informal communication a priority for continuous effort; whether that is the COO discussing the latest achievements during lunch in the staff canteen or the Chairman discussing the future path of the organisation while walking the production floor and talking casually to groups or individuals. These enable two-way communication, which gives the top management a fair idea about how the company is perceived among employees.

Face-to-face interactions, dealing directly with others is a regular occurrence and provides an excellent way for sharing ideas and for working co-operatively. Meetings can either be of a formal or informal nature, but phone communications tend to be informal, although in virtual teams conference calls + or – video can be another important form of formal communication.

Company websites will typically involve a portal or section dedicated to internal communication with and between employees. This may a Knowledge Management (KM) portal that can provide a single window for much virtual formal communication; including presentations, information about new

clients, and plenty of other company details and databases: And on the informal side the website can host an active discussion board or an internal blogging facility where people can share information freely across the globe.

### Communication can downward or upward

#### Downward Communications Examples:

- Ensure every employee receives a copy of the strategic business plan; it might help if everyone knew where they are supposed to be headed
- Ensure every employee receives an employee handbook that contains up-to-date personnel policies. Most of us like to know the rules
- Ensure every employee has access to a basic set of procedures in a standard operating manual; saves lives in an emergency
- Ensure every employee has a copy of their job description and the organisation chart. Why am I here? Who fits where?
- Orientation programs, hopefully informative and entertaining so people know where they fit into the big picture
- Hold regular departmental management meetings, fortnightly or monthly; not only when a problem shows up
- Hold full departmental staff meetings every month, ditto
- Leaders and managers communicate while walking around the facility, taking plenty of opportunities to engage individuals and pass information on
- Hold meetings to celebrate major accomplishments. Most of us want or at least enjoy validation

- Ensure all employees take part in performance reviews, ideally more than once a year. You need a good memory to save things up for 51 weeks
- Ensure major decisions and policies are formally communicated to all staff or members as soon as possible after they've been agreed, to reduce confusion and misinterpretation
- Planned recreational events that build relationships amongst employees and their respective families.

Those organisations which have understood the significance of internal communication encourage employee feedback to continuously improve the process. Curbing the use of misinformation in the grapevine of is never easy; in fact it is much easier to keep it topped up with the correct information.

#### Upward Communications Examples:

Regular project status reports passed up to direct supervisors. How things are going or not, where the problems are, where I need help.

Ensure all supervisors use one-on-one meetings as a place to ask questions and solicit input. Involvement and engagement work.

Use management and staff meetings to solicit feedback. Ask questions of the team; ditto.

Respect the "grapevine." It's probably one of the most prevalent and reliable forms of communications. Listen to it and learn from it.

Certainly not an exclusive list, just a starter for thinking. One last thought...

### **What about the typical forms of External Communication?**

What the organisation says about itself to the "outside world" is generally consumed by the employees or members too.

Written communication in the form of advertising material such as leaflets, brochures, posters, the Customers' side of the website ~ visual communication through Television and Radio advertising; all have an impact on the internal community, they all communicate internally too.

### **Does it all matter?**

Internal communication isn't some warm and fuzzy optional nicety it is the lifeblood of any organisation. If blood of the right quality doesn't circulate at just the right pressure and speed to all parts of the human body, those parts slow down and could stop working altogether. The body could then become sick and die...

An organisation where communication doesn't flow freely is no different.

More on the benefits of internal communication later...