



Solution

## Improving Communication

### *What...*

The design and execution of a known plan for systematic, transparent, and timely communication - at the organization-level ... and at the local (team, department) level.

Workplace transparency is sharing information freely and timely in an effort to benefit the organization and its people.

When employees know where and when to get information, they can be more active, versus passive, receivers of information.

Reduces communication “errors of omission” (... “I didn’t know they had changed.” “How did I not know that?” “It seems that I am the last to find out ... again.” “Why didn’t someone tell me that?”)

Decreases rumors and misinformation - and even work-related stress (... “the unknown” is a stressor).

Accountability for communication (as a giver and receiver) gets easier - and less frustrating.

Trusting relationships can flourish. In essence, “the plan” becomes “the promise”- and when we deliver consistently on that promise, trust is fostered.

### *Why...*

***“Communication works for those who work at it.”***

***- John Powell***



Before creating (or revising) a communication plan, bring clarity to the following terms:

- ▶ **Communication** - the imparting or exchanging of information or news.
- ▶ **Training & Development** - Content that is designed and delivered to be acted upon (... learn, then put into practice); content that “equips and inspires” a positive change in how we do things
- ▶ **Campaigns** - Content that is designed to keep training or standards “top of mind” (or even to provide training on tactics that are so simple to grasp, that formal structured training isn’t required such as Hallway Hospitality).
- ▶ **Meetings** - While meetings can be a forum for communication, they may also include agenda topics such as training, campaigns, and/or goal/project/process improvement activities.

Whether it is an organization-wide communication plan or a department-specific plan, consider the following:

*#1: WHAT will be communicated?*

What do employees need to know about?

- ▶ This can include happenings related to the internal workings of your organization (i.e., policy changes, project updates, etc.) as well as what’s going on in the external environment that is, or may, affect the organization.
- ▶ Report updates in regard to key strategies/priorities/goals and important performance metrics. Employees don’t want to guess as to whether or not their organization is winning -- keep them up to date on the score.

What do employees want to know about?

- ▶ Leaders may already communicate a lot of information, but if it is not what the employees want or need to know about, then the leaders have failed to communicate appropriately.

The Employee Experience Team and/or the Employee Training & Communication Team can serve as advisors and helpers as to the communication wants and needs of employees at the organization-wide level. At the local level, front-line leaders should engage the input of employees as they are key stakeholder in the communication process.



*#2: HOW and WHEN information will be communicated? WHO is the giver? WHO are the receivers?*

What are the preferences of the receivers of information? What can the givers of information commit to consistently delivering?

- ▶ You may need to conduct focus groups with employees to inquire about their communication preferences. What methods currently exist that employees find to be effective? What gaps exist? How do employees prefer to receive information? You may find that this is different based on the generational diversity in your workforce. Establish not only the preferred method(s) of communication, but the frequency and timing of various types of information.
- ▶ The specific needs for what, how, and when may be different for an organizational level plan (for top level/global communications) compared to local level plan (department/work-unit specific communications).
- ▶ The “when” may include “timed” information (routinely communicated, such as schedules, goal results) or “just in time” (ad hoc, in-the-moment, unexpected) communications. A communication plan should consider methods for timed and just-in-time information.
- ▶ Develop a plan and adhere to it related to the consistency of WHEN and HOW for all timed communications. For instance, if it is a daily communication, be consistent with the when (an exact time such “at 10am” or “by 10am”) and how (one specific method such as a huddle or posting). If it is a weekly or monthly communication, be consistent with the when (an exact day and time such as every Monday at 10am or the 1st day of each month) and how (one specific method such as a blog or newsletter).
- ▶ As reasonable, each HOW (communication channel or tactic) has one purpose (what, who, when).

*#3: Commit to a plan for systematic, consistent, and transparent communication.*

- ▶ Put as much specificity and consistency in to the plan (and its execution) as possible so that everyone can develop trust about the process. Leaders will know their roles (what, when, and how to communicate information). Employees will know their roles (what, when, and how to receive information). **The plan becomes the promise.**



## Communication Roles & Responsibilities

### ***STEERING TEAM***

In collaboration with the Employee Training & Communication Team, adopt consistent methods to communicate updates to leaders, employees, board & providers regarding the progress and happenings of the initiative; including visual communication boards and “Friday 5” communication tactics; and inclusive of any “notices to employees” related to new/revised leadership tactics/responsibilities; quarterly updates from teams/initiative; and selection of the priority focuses for quarterly “Word of Mouth” campaigns

### ***EMPLOYEE TRAINING & COMMUNICATION TEAM***

Plan & implement a consistent, branded cadence of training, campaigning, & communication. “Study-Adjust” your efforts over time (... always getting better).

- ▶ **Monthly**
  - “Campaigns” to support the action plans of the Innovation teams (bring, and keep, solutions/learning “alive”)
  - “Walk-in-my-shoes”/”Day-in-the-life” (empathy-building, silo-busting)
- ▶ **Quarterly**
  - **CEO-Employee Forums** (collaborate with Employee Experience Team and Administration/CEO to set agenda)
  - **Word-of-Mouth Campaigns** (best place to work, best place to receive care - Collaborating with the Steering Team regarding specific focuses)
  - **Team/Journey Updates** (Celebrate results and progress and look forward to what’s coming up next)

### ***LEADERS***

As well, leaders of departments/service lines will be developing and executing communication plans as Improving Communication is one of the 9 core leadership practices recommended for “The Leadership Bundle.”



ADDITIONAL RESOURCE: The Communication Planning course in the CapstoneEDU eLearning system provides training regarding the elements of a communication plan and step-by-step instruction for creating a communication plan at the organization or department level.





***“It’s time for employee communicators to start thinking like marketers, delivering the right information to the right employee at the right time through the right channel.”***

***- Shel Holtz, internal communications director and advocate***

### Sample Department Communication Plan

- **Need to know today: urgent** communications are posted near the time clock on red paper. This must be read prior to the start of each shift.
- **Need to know today: emergent** messages will be communicated in person. The leader will seek out all who need to know to deliver the message individually or in groups.
- Non-urgent communications will be included in a weekly blog. This communication is posted on Tuesday of each week no later than noon. Read within one week of publication. This blog will also be posted on the department’s communication board.
- All goal metrics will be posted on the department’s communication board by 5:00 p.m. on “Metric Monday” (...which is the Monday following each payday Friday).
- The department’s staffing schedule will be posted four weeks in advance of the start of the schedule in the on-line scheduling system. Employees are required to review the new schedule prior to the start of the schedule. Changes to the schedule after posting of the finalized schedule will be communicated via phone call or direct communication prior to updating the on-line schedule.
- Monthly staff meetings will be held on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:15 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. These meetings will last 45 minutes and will be started via a huddle at the department’s communication board. The agenda for the meeting will be posted on the communication board one week in advance of the meeting.
- Quarterly updates to goal action plans will be posted on the department’s communication board by the first day of each quarter (January, April, July, and October).
- The department’s finalized annual budget and goals will be the topic of the Employee Forums scheduled in early December each year.
- All emails will have a clear subject line, including response date for any time sensitive communications.

