

Successful employee communication can happen

There is a simple, seven-step formula that guarantees success in communicating with employees. It does not include fancy media, the Internet, psychobabble or clever wordsmithing. After helping many organizations to communicate almost every topic you can imagine, I know you can use these seven steps to successfully communicate any subject.

1. Keep the message simple. I don't mean be simplistic. Just pare down the message to its core. I tell my clients to write their key message in seven words. If they can do that, employees will understand — maybe not in all the detail that the lawyers, actuaries and consultants would like, but enough for employees to get the point.

2. Tell employees what this means to the business. With all the communications noise around us — e-mail, cell phones, HDTV, fax machines, voice mail — employees need to know

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS



Steve Juetten



Answering the “What does it mean to me” question gets an employee to do, think or feel something.

4. Involve supervisors. Whatever the issue, employees' preferred source of information is their supervisor. The supervisor knows the employee, knows the organization, is usually trusted and is there, at the site on the floor. By

why they should care about a particular message. If your message is tied into a legitimate business reason, employees will listen.

3. Tell an employee what this means to her/him. The right business context gets an employee's attention.

“supervisor” I don't mean “manager” either. I mean the first-line person in charge.

5. Use plain media. Broadcast the message to your audiences using the simplest, most straightforward methods that you can. Employees have become distrustful of the too-slick presentation, the multicolor brochure. Leave that to the advertising community. Go to the basics — small group meetings, simple print pieces mailed home, bulletin boards, video, e-mail. Use whatever is clean and easy to execute. For employee communications, the media must convey openness to be believable and you cannot be open with slick publications.

6. Build in feedback. Communications does not happen unless you can verify that the message was received and allow for reaction to the message. Even if the feedback is “We don't like it,” communications has taken place.

7. Be honest. Give your employees the unvarnished (that is, nonshiny) truth — as much of it as you can stand. You will get much further treating your employees like the adults they are than trying to shield them from business realities or, even worse, not telling the whole story.

There you have it — seven simple steps anyone can follow to make their employee communications a success.

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