



The Constant Messenger - How to Get Your Organization to Know What it Needs to Know Before it Needs to Know it

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The Challenge

Clear and concise internal communications are an essential driver for continuity of operations. Effective communication can result in the ability of an organization to recognize areas for improvement leading to proactive implementation of change before it is forced to react to an unforeseen event.

The real measure of success of effective internal communications is a **'culture of compliance'**. With a culture of compliance there is a reduction in resistance and paranoia associated with change. That culture of compliance brings the ability to get your organization to know what it needs to know with informal methods because there is trust and support.



Scope

When an organization needs to know something the scope should not under-inform or overwhelm. Sending the impression that employees are on a 'need to know' basis provokes interpretation that does not promote compliance.

Too much information can intimidate and may be an indication that the organization did not send out messages as details became available.

Before composing a communication, the writer needs to consider the following

- Is the purpose of the message to implement a decision to be made or an action to be taken? / or
- If actions that have been taken and decisions that already been made resulted in the need for the communication.

Method

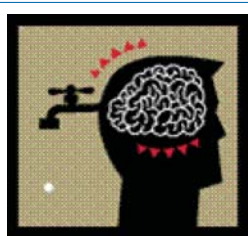
The use of simple methods to send internal messages is a good way to inform without making members of your organization glaze over with the thought of another power point presentation or dense training session. For this reason, the suggestions for internal communications is the employee newsletter and strategically placed, well designed graphic posters.

Newsletters

Whether electronic or in hard copy, employee newsletters are a familiar way to introduce initiatives or reinforce existing procedures. However, passively sending out a newsletter without measuring effectiveness of the effort may be a waste of time.

To gauge whether employees are actually paying attention to the content of newsletters or not, the use of scenario situations can be used to coax feedback.

- Ask **'What would you do?'** type questions related to a probable situation to evaluate understanding and/or implementation of a particular requirement or protocol.
- Allow for anonymous submissions or indicate that responses can be confidential.
- Then, include feedback with constructive commentary in the following publication.
- If you get a good idea from a response, provide for some sort of appropriate reward for the person if they agree to be identified.



Feedback will indicate that management is listening to employees.

Rewarding good ideas can promote participation and reinforce a culture of compliance.

Constructive commentary provides a safe environment for employees to interact with management.

Posters

This method is most effective when the message is a specific, simple concept that relates to an internal issue affecting employees.



Posters should be used;

- To showcase new information that is presented in a graphic design.
- To promote topics that require more immediate, proactive implementation (i.e., for health and safety reasons)
- To supplement information in an employee newsletter

The reason for the poster should be clearly stated in a headline or title.

New posters should be placed in isolation to draw the person's eye away from other, familiar signs, and should make the reader pause for review. Posters related to information in newsletters should refer to each other.

Most importantly, posters should be removed when the information is no longer relevant or becomes obsolete.

Results

It seems simple, but being able to disseminate internal communications that provides 'stealth' training while also conducting a passive survey on how much your employees understand, can or will react to a situation accomplishes more than one thing:

- 1) It tells your employees the topics that are of interest to the organization
- 2) It helps employees to understand their own level of expertise
- 3) It exposes areas for improvement that need targeted instruction
- 4) It allows an organization to plan for future training, using internal sources who may be willing to train their peers
- 5) It provides a constant, consistent message to everyone at the same time.

