



The High Costs of Poor Communication

When a company puts effort into its internal communications, it can achieve improvements in safety performance, advances in productivity and a strengthening of morale up and down the line.

Conversely, when good ideas don't seem to work, the fault may be traceable to a leadership team's failure to communicate clearly and persuasively. (The problem usually isn't that employees aren't listening. What supervisor has not heard his or her offhand morning-huddle comment repeated months later?)

Companies nowadays have access to more communications channels than ever. The price of printing is dropping, many employees are a phone call away and online technology permits targeted, timely exchanges with the entire workforce.

Safety

When a railroad radio transmits one word three times — *Emergency, emergency, emergency* — it communicates all too well. Everyone knows that someone has been hurt — usually the result of an earlier communication failure. *Nobody told us about a track change...* It's true throughout industry. You can't build a genuine safety culture with a few posters on the wall, of course. But clear, uncluttered, visible communications — in the form of instructions, rules, policies and feedback — lie at the heart of working safe.

Productivity

On the shop floor, a change in product flow may be perfectly reasonable from a business point of view, but that doesn't mean employees will take to it. Why not smooth the way beforehand, with full and open explanations of what's happening and why?

Downstream, is your sales force selling what you want to make? They will — if you align sales to core strategy, reward success on that basis and communicate these policies unambiguously.

Morale

Good people leave employers for different reasons, and some are beyond the firm's control. In exit interviews, though, many employees report that they "never felt like part of things" — they weren't listened to, consulted or even informed about important matters that affected their jobs.

The cost of replacing an employee, whether high or low, can sometimes be traced to poor communication. More widespread is the hidden cost of quiet desperation — when employees don't feel connected enough to a company and its goals to make much of an effort.

A proactive communications program is worth consideration. The strongest ones are usually centralized in a dedicated department or integrated into human resources.

Skilled communicators can take messages from management and turn them into clear and interesting content. They know it's possible to create a newsletter that will be read from cover to cover — from executive suite to assembly line — if it's attractive and consistent and it blends company messaging and stories of real people.

And they also know that "better" doesn't mean "more." How much time is wasted in loose meetings, watching useless presentations or deciphering long and incomprehensible e-mails — or writing them? A couple of short workshops, aimed at the right departments, can help a company bring

these time-eaters under control.

Our firm can show you some time-tested methods for improving communication inside your company.