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## The Many Benefits of Effective Communication Plans

*The resulting discussion leads to continuous improvement and innovation*

SUCCESSFUL PERFORMANCE MEANS BRINGING TOGETHER the best resources for serving future needs with a company's capabilities, investing in these resources, then constantly measuring and managing the results. To best bring these resources together, you must communicate effectively. And for that, you need a plan.

A Communication Plan relates the a company's brand, image, mission, values, and goals to all employees, informing them of what the company does and for whom; the benefits it offers and the problems it solves. It describes communication channels that facilitate the exchange of information and ideas among your board, executives, management, and staff. It is a strategic discussion about the very core of a company: how it operates, what it stands for, what it delivers. This discussion must be robust enough so that everyone related to the company speaks with one voice, one mind, one purpose: a focused, clear, articulate message.

**Creating and implementing a Communication Plan.** One way to create and implement a Communication Plan on your behalf is by applying four communication principals: Enlighten, Convince, Motivate, and Align. These four-steps provide the framework for creating and implementing company-wide communication where everyone actively participates.

When creating a Communication Plan, address the particular challenges to communicating effectively in your company. To better evaluate poor or nonexistent internal communication, look for ways to change how you talk about problems, to truly assess and analyze these problems in a new light, and to generate new and innovative solutions.

Examine the relationship between organizational structure and specific communicative practices, how communication practices by various levels of hierarchy establish, maintain, or change the message and, ultimately, the culture. Anticipate communication deficiencies, and use these discoveries as a means for facilitating organizational development and innovation.

In a Communication Plan, draw the map that enables you to create a company dialog. Be sure to implement simple, clear communication through the most effective channels so that all employees can easily access, understand, and distribute the necessary information. Devise a clear overriding message that embodies your image and values.

**A well-implemented Communication Plan has many benefits.** Effective internal communication, implemented through a thoughtful plan, allows employees to feel comfortable with the company and contribute to its vibrant culture. And it's this vibrant culture that leads to the many benefits experienced through effective communication.

- ◆ Your company is able to distinguish itself enough to attract and retain the best and brightest employees.
- ◆ Your company has a strong sense of culture, one that employees help create and want to participate in.
- ◆ Employees feel comfortable enough to not only recognize and accept change and growth, but to participate and lead it.
- ◆ Employees can readily see how their contribution impacts the company and its performance.
- ◆ Employees at all levels engage in a dialogue to become intimately involved in the company and its daily interaction with its customers.
- ◆ Employees can readily see they are working for something larger than themselves, some greater cause, and thus can see the effect of their efforts on the bigger picture.
- ◆ Clear communication engenders a strategic discussion about your company and its industry, leading to continuous improvement and innovation that anticipates and addresses market needs.

To attain these benefits, your communication must be authentic, aligning words with actions; it must be real, having a human touch; and it must use a language, a voice, that everyone can speak.