



"As a company grows and changes, communication becomes more of a challenge."

The Many Reasons for Needing a Communication Plan

Growing, changing companies inevitably experience breakdowns in communication; a well-founded Communication Plan overcomes these impediments

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS TO BETTER DETERMINE how well you are communicating.

- ◆ Are your employees at all levels talking to each other?
- ◆ Do your strategic groups know what each other is doing?
- ◆ Is there a breakdown in communication—the information only goes so far, but from that point on, everyone makes it up as they go?
- ◆ Is there animosity over the perception that other groups simply don't contribute enough to the company's success?
- ◆ Does your staff know exactly how to proceed, or are there conflicting ideas?
- ◆ Are expectations clear?
- ◆ Are departments duplicating efforts while other tasks are left undone?
- ◆ Was your communication once flawless, but now that you are growing and changing quickly, these communication channels just don't work anymore or are filled with static?

Communication fails as a company grows and changes. As a company grows—whether through sales or acquisition—communication becomes more of a challenge. What once seemed so intuitive, now seems like such a struggle. The breakdown of communication channels is common. This is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather a pervasive issue with growth and change.

There are size thresholds where communication becomes problematic: approach that size and issues arise. For smaller companies this happens when you just don't know everyone in the organization any more, or staff come and go and you've never met them. For larger companies, the increasing size just doesn't fit into your infrastructure causing things to slip between the cracks. For extremely large companies, employees don't know all the countries around the world with company offices, much less what they do at those offices. There is just a sense that everything is just too distant.

Miscommunication results when channels breakdown. To compound the problem of weak-

ening communication channels, employees at all levels unwittingly communicate schizophrenically—especially managers and company leaders. A specific message about policy discussed on Monday changes by mid-week. Appeals to raise the bar of integrity are counteracted when actions fail to support this imperative. Or decisions passed down through the chain of command take diverging routes as managers and leaders at each level obfuscate the meaning, diluting its impact.

Messages about the state of the company change, sending staff in varying directions to the point where they end up in many different destinations. Off-hand remarks are misinterpreted and undermine trust.

Miscommunication can occur at all levels of a company. This kind of communication, of course, leads to confusion and misunderstanding, takes up valuable time while everyone tries to decipher the real message, and leads to shrinking morale.

Absent any overarching statement of vision and values and image, absent any clear channel of communication, absent any method for engaging in a shared multidimensional dialog, managers and leaders up and down the organizational chart are free to interpret any message and its meaning.

Effective communication is clearly stated and singular in nature. A Communication Plan must clearly state the company's brand and mission in words that can be understood and internalized by everyone. It must inform every employee about where the company is going and how it is doing.

A company's stories must be truthful and honest; they can't be mere claims using strong powerful words. The emotional value behind the words and the means of how the words are delivered must not only ring true, they must be true! When that happens, a focused strategy emerges, energizing everyone to arduously pursue a common goal of success.