



Jun 18, 2018

6 tips on Effective Communication

Why is it that, whenever you conduct an employee survey or business diagnostic, communication comes up as one of the key areas for improvement?

In part, it is because we are human and we each deliver and receive and interpret information in our own individual way.

In part, it can be because, as business owners and managers, we are technically competent in what our businesses do but we are not necessarily trained or skilled in communication techniques.

In part, it is because, in any business, the timely and accurate flow of the right information to the right people is critical for getting work done efficiently and optimizing job satisfaction for the people involved.

In part, it can be because we don't think through the actions that we are taking or changes that we are implementing by consciously considering who is affected and needs to be communicated with.

And, in part, it can be because in the everyday hurly burly of running a business, we can forget to communicate or have trouble listening to others who have something to say that is significant for them.

So what can you do to improve communication in your business?

1. *Project positivity from the top*

- a. Be honest and transparent
- b. Be clear about purpose
- c. Set good practice standards in policies (not just consequences for breaches)
- d. Ensure that all of your managers/leaders believe the message "sing from the same hymn book"
- e. Be timely
- f. Be responsive
- g. Celebrate successes

2. *Define the audience on 3 levels*

Tailor your message to people to take account of:

- a. Whole of business communications (that everyone needs to know)
- b. What particular teams might need to know about the impact to them and
- c. What individuals need to know about the impact for them

Consider other stakeholders as well eg. Customers, suppliers, contractors, etc and what you need to tell them if they are (potentially) affected in some way.



3. Build it into project management

- a. Identify stakeholders in each project up front
- b. Identify key points and messages to be given in the project
- c. Build these communications into the project plan
- d. Make sure it happens
- e. Review the effectiveness of communications as part of the review process on project completion
- f. Learn from that and continuously improve

4. Validate understanding

This is about ensuring that people concerned “get the message” and know what it means for them. It is really just a question of asking them what it means for them, ensuring they understand and observing what is happening in practice.

5. Give your people genuine voice

This is probably the improvement opportunity that comes up most often in employee surveys and there are lots of opinions such as:

- a. Set up as staff consultative committee or representative workplace improvement team
- b. Do regular employee surveys to get people’s views and spot check progress
- c. Have a publicly committed to improvement plan for people and culture
- d. Ensure that you have trusted and effective grievance and suggestions processes in place
- e. Give people regular and balanced feedback about how they are going

6. Make sure you have the capability

Continuously work on your communication processes and skills as a core business competency that impacts critically on all aspects of running a business.

If you don’t have the strengths internally. Look externally to get help in communications design, positive policy writing and coaching for people in your business who play key roles in communications.

The spin offs are higher efficiency, happier people and more profitable business.

Ridgeline HR offers a variety of coaching, consulting and contracting services to assist members with consultation and communication requirements. Enquiries can be directed to Peter Maguire on **0438 533 311** or email pmaguire@ridgelinehr.com.au