

Checklist of Communication Best Practice Solutions

- Find the balance between over and under communicating.**

There is no magic formula for how much communication is the right amount of communication. You will have to use trial and error. This is a matter of wisdom, where there is a spirit of openness, but a filter of usefulness that is applied. The idea is to empower your staff, not overburden them.
- Utilize various vehicles of communication, but focus on face to face.**

There are numerous means of communication in the workplace today. Make the most of new technology as well as traditional means of communicating with your staff in order to most effectively relay the information that they need to get their jobs done. Whenever possible, use face to face communication as this is the least misconstrued and provides for two-way communication.
- Be willing to learn from your staff.**

There are multiple benefits from being willing to learn from your staff. First, you potentially have much to gain. Although leadership has the advantage of seeing the forest as a whole, staff have a valuable perspective amidst the trees. They know their needs and that of those whom you serve better than anyone else. Listening to your staff also builds a healthy relationship of respect and trust.
- Communicate regularly.**

With all the demands of work, it's all too easy to let unnecessary things fall by the wayside. However, communication is important and should not be forgotten. Additionally, it is important to maintain a regular pattern of communication to cultivate a sense in your staff that they are respected and cared about by the leadership.
- Communicate openly.**

Make an effort to be transparent as much as possible. Give straight answers, especially to difficult questions. Leadership sets the tone in trust for the whole organization by how much they are willing to share with their staff.

■ Remember that everything the organization does communicates something.

No matter how much energy you put into carefully crafting your written communication to your staff, if the actions of the leadership don't match up, staff won't get the message you want. Employees see actions such as promotions and raises as affirmations of certain kinds of behavior - make sure you are passing on the message you intend.

■ Make communication part of everyone's job, rather than relying on specialists.

Although it may be tempting to leave communication to your Human Resources or Communications department, it is vital that everyone take on communication as their own personal responsibility. This is particularly true of leadership since employees may only half-trust what Human Resources has to say. If everyone is making an effort to communicate, everyone should have the information they need in order to do their job well.

■ Act on staff feedback.

No matter how much you may encourage staff input and stress how much you value your staff, if you don't actually follow through on their suggestions, they will see little point in communicating with you. Just as parents are warned in the Bible not to discourage their children, so too should leadership be especially careful not to discourage their staff by ignoring their suggestion.

■ Listen actively.

Look the person speaking in the eye. Follow up on email and phone messages. Restate what you understood to ensure comprehension and show that you are paying attention.

■ Focus on informing rather than persuading.

It may be tempting for leadership to utilize memos and other communications to argue their point, however this distances staff from leadership, particularly because it offers no two-way communication. Instead try to use communication to inform rather than manipulate.