

## Employee Communication: Three Ways to Create Transformation in Organizations

By Marcia Xenitelis



There are two distinct ways to use employee communication; one is to inform employees about what is happening in an organization, the other is to engage employees in the process of change. In this article we are going to highlight 3 case studies that demonstrate clearly the different techniques and approaches to ensure that your employee communication strategies bring about transformation in your organization.

**Employee Communication Case Study 1:** At this telecommunications manufacturing plant, the company decided to involve employees in the organizational changes that were taking place. The company is involved in high technology and has approximately 1,900 employees. After a senior management workshop it was decided that a customer service change program be developed.

One of the methods introduced was the round table concept. The communications team organized for 18 people from a specific area to have a 90 minute meeting with senior managers. However, the key to the success of these meetings was that the employees did most of the talking and the senior managers, most of the listening. The organization planned to learn from these meetings what the barriers were to success and customer satisfaction. Over a 10 week period, 50 round tables were scheduled. At the completion of this exercise, approximately one third of the total of the organization's workforce were involved in the round tables. Participants in the round table program were selected from every employment level with a balanced representation of gender and race.

Patterns in the issues that were raised began to emerge and senior management began to take notice of what were to become the main elements of the customer service change program. What was critical with this approach was that soon after the round table program of 10 weeks, employees began to actually see their suggestions adopted, and changes taking place. To supplement the face to face

meetings with managers, a bi-weekly newsletter was produced. Each issue was 2 pages in length and included a dedicated space for employees to make suggestions to managers for improvement in customer service.

**Employee Communication Case Study 2:** This hospital wanted to cut costs and at the same time ensure that patients were not adversely impacted by the changes. It was also a major provider of healthcare in a small community so it was essential that the reputation of high quality care was not reduced.

So they sought feedback using focus groups, telephone surveys and also contacting the care providers. Three key attributes in patient care came up as the main contributors to patient satisfaction. The hospital staff concentrated on improving these 3 areas whilst still reducing costs. Cross functional teams were established with employees volunteering to take part. An employee with strong project management skills was selected to lead each team. A list of options to improve the experience of the patients was presented to management with details of costings and timeframes for implementation. Agreement was reached on the changes and the senior management team ensured line managers were not blockers to the changes.

**Employee Communication Case Study 3:** The main objective of this strategy was to educate staff in reading and understanding the company financial statements and how they directly related to the work that they were doing. The other minor objective was the need for employees in other departments to understand how what they did impacted on the remainder of the organization and the bottom line.

Employees from all areas were encouraged to review the company books and financial statements. An extension of this policy was to talk with all employees in groups and discuss what the figures meant, specifically how they related to the work that they were doing and then to the big picture of the organization's profitability. The strategy was more than an attempt to educate the workforce; rather it focused on action plans when the budgets and finances were off course for their particular area. The staff would then look at their operations and how they could do things differently to remedy the situation. This method included training on understanding financial reports, which has the benefit not only of learning how to read the financial statements of the organization but also what action the team in each department could take to change the financial outcomes. Copies of the financial statements were distributed to employees once there was recognition that they would understand what was being conveyed. By understanding and teaching employees the direct relationship between their work and the financial results of the organization they are more inclined to understand the message.

Finally the role of the communicator is to ensure that all employees have understood the key message and that it means something to them. Employee communication is all about using a variety of methods and techniques to ensure that no matter how complex, long term or risky the message is, the desired outcome for the organization will be achieved. Employee engagement and employee communication are uniquely connected and by combining the two outstanding results can be achieved.

***About the author:***

**Marcia Xenitelis is a recognized authority on the subject on employee communication and business transformation and has spoken at conferences around the world. For more information on the types of employee communication strategies you can implement to engage employees visit <http://www.employeecommunicationtips.com> for a wealth of free informative articles and resources.**

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