

Employee Communication: 6 Steps to Communicate Change

By Marcia Xenitelis



Whenever we begin to design an employee communication strategy that is focused on change, the most important thing to consider is that the strategies implemented must engage employees, not simply inform. In other words will the employee communication strategy you are implementing cause a change in attitude and therefore behavior, or is it simply information?

When I talk about employee engagement in this context I am focused on communication strategies that require the involvement of employees. As a result, the business issue means something to employees personally, and they now understand the reason for change and feel part of the process.

It is only when you engage employees that they will be focused on the reasons for change and therefore change their behavior to impact business outcomes. An excellent example of this is linking employees with the customer experience. When the focus of your employee communication efforts is customer satisfaction, then it is easier to establish the direct link between your strategies and business outcomes. It also creates a greater sense of engagement amongst your employees because they feel a significant increase in empowerment and understanding in how their role supports the customer experience and how they can change it.

Firstly, after identifying the current methods and tools that you use to communicate with employees, can you establish whether the tools and methods are engagement strategies or information tools? Engagement tools are designed so that it requires some involvement of the employee. Information tools mean that you are telling employees something, it is information sharing but not an opportunity to become involved. Some examples of information tools are Staff Information Bulletins, the Company Intranet, and a CEO forum. An engagement strategy on the other hand requires employees to be involved in identifying the issue and being part of the change process.

This is important because your ultimate aim in employee communication regarding change has to be to create the “Aha Moment”.

The Aha Moment is based on information that does the following:

- **Challenges the employee’s belief about an aspect of the business**
- **The information suddenly helps employees say...**
 - “Now it makes sense”
 - “Now I understand”
 - “Now I can do something about it”

One of the best ways to build the foundation for your employee communication strategy is to undertake focus group research. This will allow you to explore specific aspects of the employee’s perception of the organization and customer satisfaction and to identify the gap between reality and perception. The focus group outcomes will also help you to identify clearly what will create a paradigm shift in your employees thinking and therefore an understanding of the reasons for change.

Once you have your focus group outcomes, you can then begin designing employee communication strategies that engage employees. You should have a clear understanding about what employees know and what the facts are, and the gap between customer and staff research. Most importantly, you then identify a business issue that you feel sure your strategies can have an impact and work together within that area to implement an employee communication strategy that can be measured by business outcomes.

Finally, to move forward and realign your employee communication tools and techniques as part of a new employee communication strategy, you need to ask the following questions:

- 1. Are you aware of the business strategy or issue facing your organization, division or department?**
- 2. How effectively do your current employee communication tools address that issue or strategy?**
- 3. Have you examined customer satisfaction data; do you know the precise areas where there could be improvement?**
- 4. Do you know the key issue, the “Aha!” factor that will create a new paradigm for employees?**

5. Do your employee communication strategies engage or simply inform?

6. How do you measure the impact of your strategy on the business?

Once you have answered the above questions then you will be more than half way toward designing an employee communication strategy that engages employees, not simply one that informs them.

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 Marcia and her organization visit www.employeecommunicationtips.com.

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