EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES
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Four elements of effective communications:

1. Intimacy
2. Organizational clarity/culture
3. Training
4. Process and technology

INTIMACY

Intimacy is the most influential element of effective communications. When people know each other better, care about each other, they tend to think of each other and are better communicators.

Intimacy also can be stair stepped into rules and process in the company.

*Written note/letter
*Email
*Text
*Phone
*Video
*Live - face to face

Effective communication requires the level of intimacy that builds trust. Therefore, the more difficult, conflicting, challenging, communications will need increased intimacy to be effective. Good company policy that gives clarity to the required intimacy will improve the overall effectiveness of communications. An example of this would be: No communications of opinions can be transmitted through email.

Most organizations are lacking in video technology usage. It should be a standard in this industry to have video chat capabilities on every desk. Even internal communications improve by not having to leave your desk and meet with someone face to face through video. It is a much better model than telephone. If multiple locations exist, video is a MUST means of communications between locations. Also, having video communications techniques practiced internally will allow for client communications in the same manner. This could be a differentiator for many firms.

ORGANIZATIONAL CLARITY / CULTURE

Organizational clarity and culture are needed to have effective communications. The primary reason is because effective communication is a belief and requires specific behaviors. We define culture as normal beliefs and behaviors.

Language around the elements of proactive communication, repeating rules and systems, holding people accountable to behaviors, are all factors to reach the goal of great communications.

Placing a statement in the company's clarity documents will help initiate this process. The next step is to have formal process to repeat this statement of communication to all employees. Executive leaders must model the behavior and hold people accountable to follow all agreed upon behaviors.

TRAINING

Training is necessary but the least effective element of effective communications. The training items should begin with "who should do what, by when?" When people understand this concept and it is common language, communication will become a top of mind priority. Training on systems and processes, and technology, organizational skills, understanding intimacy, and understanding when to communicate, are all valuable items.

PROCESS AND TECHNOLOGY

Communications process includes having rules and works flows in place that all people follow. Identification of when to communicate, what to communicate, and how to communicate are all part of the rules.

Example would be: All meetings will end by asking "who needs to know what by when?"

Work flows would include communications in steps of all work flows.

Technology is a very valuable part of communication but can also be a deterrent to effective communications. The right systems are the key to success (with the right training).

Technology systems do NOT solve communications problems. Culture must be in place first, training second, and then the systems are used within those models.

A great example of this is the story of two agencies using Yammer. One agency put Yammer in place and people were told to use it. The employees didn't completely understand how it worked or what to do with it. They signed up and put a couple of entries in but continued to use email and verbal communications on items that should have been put in Yammer. Everyone stopped using the system within 60 days and it died.

The second agency had an employee meeting to understand why they needed a better communication system. They showed how Yammer worked and did training to make sure it was easy and functional. They included smart phone technology to increase use in different environments. They also preset the systems to make sure groups were set up appropriately and the system was well developed before introducing to employees. They established rules on the system. Email was no longer allowed for internal communications (one of the rules).

Leadership set the example of how to use the system and they were most active. This company has now been using Yammer for 3 years and are very effective in collaboration and keeping people informed.

Other technologies used in communications are:

1. Chatter. However, it is much more complex than Yammer. Many are finding it too complex.
2. Texting with smart phones.
3. Operating systems.
4. Sales CRM systems
5. Social media
6. Internal Intranet

SUMMARY

Effective communication is not easy and it will require all aspects mentioned in this white paper to be successful. Only doing one or two of these items will many times have zero positive impact, and sometimes a negative impact on the organization.