

10 Tips for Communication with Front Line Staff

1. Simplify the message
2. Reduce information overload
3. Find ways to 'listen' and gather feedback
4. Provide appropriate support channels
5. Find ways to achieve message cut-through
6. Maintain levels of capability and knowledge
7. Make senior managers accessible to front line staff
8. Engage customer facing staff by involving them
9. Involve all business units in communicating with front line staff
10. Target messages by location, role or user profile

'The SnapComms channels offer a very effective way to communication with geographically distributed stores in a retail environment'
Emma Jane Johnson, Retail Communications Manager, Virgin Mobile

Engaged employees = happy customers. There is little doubt that customer service impacts a company's brand identity. There is also little doubt that happy satisfied employees translates to happy satisfied customers. Hence effective communication with frontline staff is a critical part of good customer service.

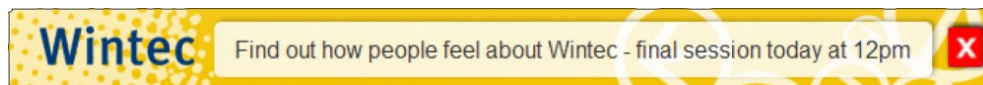
Effective, two way employee communications are a key factor in ensuring that staff are motivated and effective. However, front line staff are often remote from main offices and may experience higher staff turnover than other parts of the business. These factors can have several implications:

- Staff training is a constant and on-going challenge
- Staff don't always know where to go for the right information
- Establishing effective employee feedback channels can be difficult
- Employee engagement is constantly being built from 'the ground up'

To make the situation more complicated, front line staff may be employed indirectly, e.g. via a franchise, and therefore even harder to reach.

Tip 1 – Simplify the message for front line staff

Scrolling News Feeds deliver information on-screen to targeted front line employee groups. Simply write your own headlines, include a quick summary and add click-through hyperlinks to further information as required. As employees see a headline of interest, they can click-through to read the full message or article there and then, or make a mental note to review their news feed history at a later time (e.g. when they are less busy interfacing with customers).



Discreet updates. Headlines can remain discreet if computers are located where customers may be able to see the screens. Front line employees can shrink a News Feed down to a discreet notification icon which can be expanded later.

Desktop Alerts can highlight the latest updates or notify front line staff of breaking news. Concise alert messages can be read and digested in a matter of seconds. Click-through links to further information, allow front line staff to dig deeper as required. As with Scrolling News Feeds, an initial alert notification window can contain an appropriate message for customer facing computers.

An initial alert notification window can contain an appropriate message for customer facing computers.



Tip 2 – Reduce information overload for customer facing staff

Customer facing staff can feel deluged by information and it can be a major source of workplace stress for them. This can reduce the quality of their interactions with customers. In addition, an overload of information means that employees may find it hard to effectively identify and assimilate important information due to excessive background ‘noise’.

Aggregate mass emails. The SnapMag tool is an email aggregation tool which significantly reduces information overload. For nice-to-know and non-urgent information, it allows you to collate such items into an electronic magazine. For example, rather than IT sending an email update about a planned outage, or marketing sending out product information updates and HR sending their staffing updates out via email, all of these messages can be consolidated into the same magazine by each department as quickly and easily as sending a mass email.

Staff magazines can also be themed with distinct branding. For example; product updates, pricing updates and process and service updates.

SnapMag is pushed directly to targeted computers instead of being delivered by email. Scrolling News Feeds can notify staff that a new edition has been published or staff can access the magazine via a hyperlink.

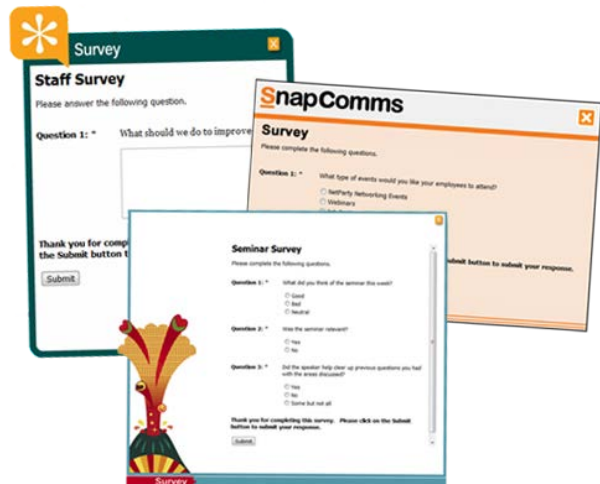


Tip 3 – Find ways to ‘listen’ and gather feedback from front line staff

Listening is an essential part of good employee communication. Effective front line communication is not a top-down, one-way exercise, but involves listening and demonstrating an inclination to act in response to feedback. ‘Listening’ can be a real challenge for a distributed, customer facing workforce.

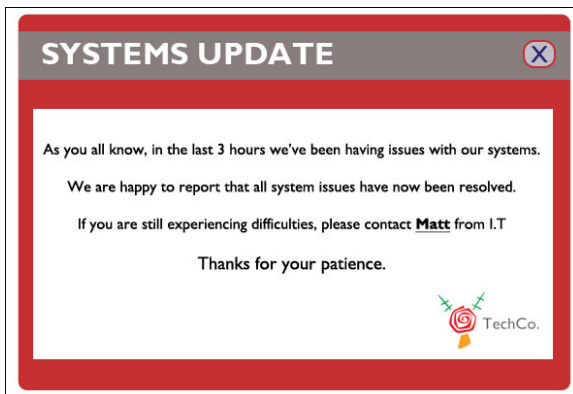
The SnapComms tools can be your ‘ear.’ They provide very effective ways to ‘listen’ and gather feedback from front line staff.

Staff surveys. SnapComms Staff Survey tool is different to other staff survey tools because it is pushed directly to targeted computer screens (and not delivered by email). The initial pop-up notification can contain an appropriate customer facing message and front line staff can choose to defer responding until later. Options allow you to specify how frequently and how often the pop-up message will reappear as a reminder until the staff survey is completed. The Staff Survey is quick and easy for staff to participate in and can cover everything from the effectiveness of operations and processes, to capturing front line employee’s views and customer perceptions.



Employee discussion forums can provide a virtual meeting place where customer facing staff can share their ideas, opinions, and feedback. Snap Forum allows front line staff to post ideas anonymously, which, in some circumstances, can be a good means of finding out what staff really think.

The SnapComms employee discussion forums are highly secure and provide a range of moderation options that allow you to keep a close eye on the conversations taking place. Targeting options mean that you can set up specific secure forums targeted to specific employee interest groups.



SnapMag can then provide an effective way to advise staff of the actions being taken in response to their feedback. A section in SnapMag titled, for example, 'Acting on Your Feedback' can contain short features over viewing measures being taken based on feedback from front line staff. Closing the loop on staff feedback back can really help build employee commitment and engagement.

Tip 4 – Provide appropriate support channels for front line staff

Staff who are working in remote locations, such as branch offices and stores, can often feel cut off from the wider organization. When they have questions or issues it can sometimes be hard to find quick and convenient support.

Local supervisors and managers play a vital role in providing support to, and communicating with, their teams. They can also ensure that front line employees have a 'line of sight' between the organization's vision and their jobs. [Read more.](#)

The SnapComms Staff Survey tool can act as an open ended survey template which customer facing staff can access at any time in order to provide feedback or just comment on issues or problems they face. The tool also provides a means to measure the effectiveness of managers as communicators. Easy answer, multiple choice questions such as:

- My supervisor / manager effectively explains how company initiatives will affect our departments
- My supervisor/ manager is good at speaking in front of groups
- Who did you hear about XXX from?
- Do you understand how your team /role's activities can contribute to XYZ initiative?

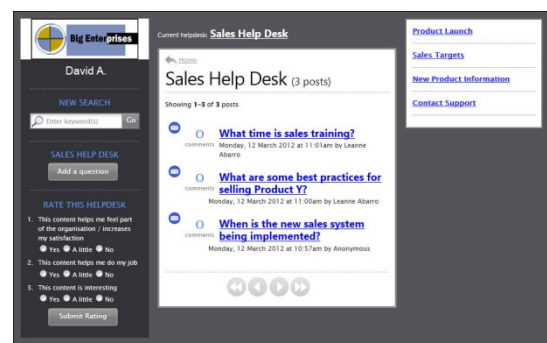
...can help you assess how effective managers are at communicating key messages to front line employees. Benchmarking this capability allows you to set standards, reward good behavior and provide training to those managers who are not performing well.

Helpdesk tools allow staff, who are experiencing problems, to report an issue or ask a question in an online 'helpdesk' format. Moderators can be assigned to a particular 'helpdesk' and will receive instant desktop alert notifications when new questions are posted. Moderators can answer questions directly or provide direction (via a hyperlink to the intranet, network, or web) to where the correct answer can be found. Each specific question can be tagged and is searchable; meaning past questions and answers can be easily located in an evolving repository of knowledge.

Tip 5 – Find ways to achieve message cut-through

Message cut-through for priority messages. It's getting harder and harder to achieve message cut-through with so much "noise." This is particularly an issue for busy, customer facing staff who use computers only intermittently during the day. For important updates, such as pricing changes, fraud updates, notification of system outages or major business announcements, message cut-through can be a priority.

SnapComms Desktop Alert is a powerful way to achieve message cut-through. It is a targetable Desktop Alert that 'pops up' on employee's computer screens. Initial pop-up notifications can contain discreet messages if computers are customer facing. However, the employee eventually has to open or respond to the alert message to remove it from their computer (unless an expiry date or maximum reoccurrence option has been specified)



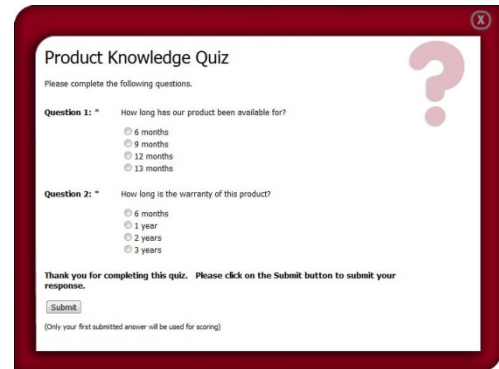
Reporting options mean you can report on who has / has not opened the full message and/or clicked links contained in the alert message. This can be great for compliance requirements such as health and safety and code of conduct messages.

Tip 6 – Maintain levels of capability and knowledge

Knowledge is key. A good knowledge and understanding of products, services and key business processes is essential to developing effective, satisfied front line staff and delivering good customer service. The next time you roll out a training program, remember, in 30 days people typically forget 80% of what they have learnt if it is not reinforced.

Reinforce training and measure and raise capability using Staff Quizzes. The Snap Staff Quiz tool was developed for this purpose. With Snap Quiz you can:

- Reinforce training.
- Enhance knowledge (e.g. around key processes)
- Benchmark and set standards
- Influence attitudes with 'scenario' quizzes (e.g. "In situation A do you....?")
- Create competition. Inspire staff to reach high standards
- Engage in fun initiatives. Motivate staff with fun competitions and prizes (e.g. include a silly answer in multi-choice questions to make people smile)
- Measure effectiveness of training (e.g. 6 months after attending training, have behaviors changed?)

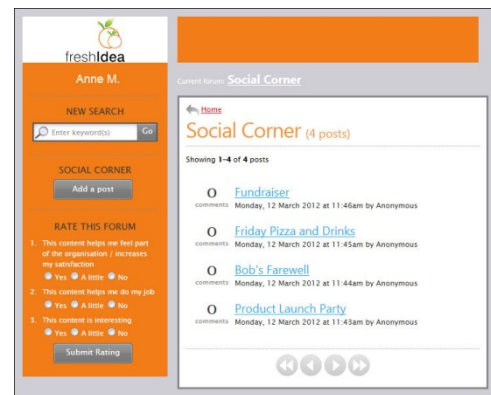


The SnapComms Staff Quiz is quick to set up, easily targeted to specific groups and is really easy for people to answer. It 'pops up' on the employee's computer and provides options to complete now or defer until later. You can specify how frequently and how often the quiz will reappear until it is completed.

'**Silent Quizzes**' that staff can opt into via a hyperlink can also be set up. Embedded hyperlinks allow answers to be researched on the intranet and an optional display of the correct answers and scoring can provide further reinforcement of learning.

Tip 7 – Make senior managers accessible to front line staff

Find ways to make senior managers more accessible to front line staff. Research consistently shows that confidence and trust in leadership is a top driver of employee engagement. It is important that customer facing employees believe in and relate to senior managers and see how their role fits within and contributes to the wider organization.



blogs. The SnapComms plug and play internal discussion forums enable key managers to blog about various aspects of the business. Encourage front line staff to ask questions and seek clarification. Leadership blogs can help staff relate to the human side of managers and build engagement and commitment.

SnapComms Internal Blog tool also allow you to enlist the people that staff respect to write blogs, answer questions and provide a credible source of context covering a variety of topics and issues. One example could be to have a successful sales performer blog about "The Secrets of My Success" and a customer service champion to blog about "The Road to Customer Service Excellence".

Video Alerts. SnapComms tools include a Video Alert format that delivers video to targeted employee desktops. If face-to-face opportunities with the executives are limited, Video Alerts can provide an alternative. Front line staff can still see the commitment and intent in the senior manager's eyes and hear the passion/empathy in their voice.

Tip 8 – Engage customer facing staff by involving them

Involvement is an important aspect of engagement and commitment to an organization. Find ways to involve front line staff and allow them to influence some aspects of the business operations.

Collect ideas. Some of the best ideas and insights reside with front-line staff that interface with customers. Use staff surveys delivered to the desktop to gather feedback from a representative group of employees (not just those with agendas who will take the time to opt in to an online survey)/

Build involvement and engagement with the wider organization. Consider job swaps and company volunteer programs. Allow employees to contribute to projects and initiatives being run by the wider organization. Increase awareness of these opportunities by promoting them effectively (for example by screen saver messaging and articles in the staff magazine)..

Employee discussion forums offer a powerful way of holding ‘virtual meetings’. Employees don’t need to be in the same location or available at the same time. They don’t even have to say who they are. You can involve people and receive timely and honest feedback. Employee Discussion forums can also be exceptionally useful as a brainstorming canvas for focus groups. Get front line staff involved and keep them engaged.

Tip 9 – Involve all business units in communicating with front line staff

Delegated administration rights allow nominated individuals across the business to communicate directly with front line staff. For example:

- Marketing might run new product quizzes, screensavers promoting new pricing plans and product offers and put articles into SnapMag highlighting the latest marketing updates on the intranet.
- HR might run screensavers and/or submit articles into SnapMag promoting new services and support schemes available for staff.
- Etc.



Tip 10 – Message targeting to any location, role or user profile

Active directory integration allows messages to be targeted to specific staff groups by location, role and/or user profile. Additional targeted groups can also be set up and the unique Snap client applet (specific to the organization) ensures that all staff can be reached regardless of their location or network settings.

Related Resources

- Remote employee communications - white paper
- Bringing line managers on board
- Reducing information overload

Visit our White Papers page for additional resources:

