



Four Ways to Help Your Managers Become Better Communicators

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Global research confirms that face-to-face communication through frontline managers is the preferred and most trusted communication channel for all employees. Yet, this critical communication channel is often overlooked and the effect it has on business results is often underestimated.

Face-to-face communication means dialogue. People having conversations build relationships and trust, those intangible benefits that inspire employee engagement and business performance. When was the last time you were inspired by an email or engaged in a meaningful conversation through a podcast? You get the picture.

When done well, face-to-face employee communication driven by frontline managers can have a significant positive impact on engagement levels, change management efforts and business performance.

After a decade of studying change and communication, Towers Watson concluded that "Companies with high effectiveness in change management and communication are three and a half times more likely to significantly outperform their industry peers than firms that are not effective in these areas."

Sadly, face-to-face communication doesn't always come naturally to people.

Effective communication is often noted as a key competency for managerial positions, yet outside of best practice organisations the skill is rarely defined, and even then, the communication competencies of a great leader tend to be less than specific.

There are managers who are natural-born communicators, capable of inspiring their people and telling them exactly what they need to know. There are those who believe they are fantastic communicators, because they email their staff 200 times a day and hold a team meeting once a week.

I've also worked with many who believe the sole responsibility for communicating lies with the employee communication team, but my personal favourite are those managers who just don't have time to communicate. These ones are special.

If managers don't understand the importance of the role they play in the communication process and are not equipped with the appropriate supporting tools to share information in a consistent and effective way, their employees start to look elsewhere for information. That's when rumours start and the grapevine takes over. This situation is bad for business and employee morale.

That's where we come in. Internal communication professionals play a crucial role in helping their organisation support this effort by providing deliberate and consistent support for managers. And let's face it; many could use our expert help.

Here are four ways you can help your managers become better communicators:



Four Steps to Improving Manager Communication

# 01 CREATE A MANAGER COMMUNICATION STRATEGY	# 02 GIVE THEM A TOOLKIT	# 03 HELP THEM IDENTIFY WITH THEIR ROLE	# 04 ENSURE MESSAGES ARE DELIVERED AND UNDERSTOOD
 Define the role of managers in the communication process and ensure that the initiative is actively championed by senior management. Include an arsenal of tools and practices for listening, receiving, communicating and responding to a message.	 Identify your key business priorities and prepare a toolkit (key messages, FAQs etc.) that managers can use to communicate relevant and meaningful information. Keep an archive of material in one location so managers can self-serve when they need to.	 Determine the communication skills of managers in your organisation and provide training as needed. Not all managers understand or believe that ongoing communication and sharing information with their staff is an important or essential part of their job.	 Always check to make sure that messages are being delivered and understood. Use employee research to benchmark the quality and effectiveness of communication delivered throughout your organisation and measure improvements during and after implementation.

1. Develop a manager communication strategy

A manager communication strategy clearly defines the role of managers in the communication process, and prepares and equips them to be true communicators in a reliable and cohesive way across the organisation. Make sure you include an arsenal of tools and practices for listening, receiving, communicating and responding to a message, and that the initiative is actively championed by senior management.

2. Prepare a communication toolkit

Identify your organisation's key business priorities and prepare a communication toolkit (key messages, conversation starters, FAQs etc.) that managers can use to communicate relevant and meaningful information to their employees.

Keep an archive of communication material in one location so managers can self-serve when they need to.

3. Help managers identify with their communication role

Determine the communication skills of managers in your organisation and provide training as needed. Not all managers understand or believe that ongoing communication and sharing information with their staff is an important or essential part of their job.

4. Ensure the cascade process includes follow-up

Always check to make sure that messages are being delivered and understood. Use employee research to benchmark the quality and effectiveness of communication delivered throughout your organisation and measure improvements during and after implementation.



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Sia Papageorgiou is Cropley Communication's Director, Strategic Internal Communication and Digital Media. She is an experienced and sought-after facilitator, speaker, and internal communication professional with a 20-year track record of delivering creative communication strategies and employee engagement programs that drive understanding, engagement and performance. [Learn more.](#)