

Organizational Communications and SharePoint

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One of the top managerial issues seen across organizations of all sizes, that continuously shows up again and again in organizational climate surveys is COMMUNICATIONS.

Dr. Niranjan Prasad Upadhyay, a noted organizational communications expert writing for Spotlight's Communications Forum (Spotlight, Vol. 24, No. 04, July 30 - August 05 2004) says: "Communication is a vital managerial concern especially for the effective administration . . . and for fulfilling the target of the organization . . . every manager must be dynamic in resolving each aspect of organizational problems through communication. Particularly, managers indulge in diversified functions, i.e. planning, organizing, controlling, procurement, development, compensation, integration, maintenance . . . and to execute these functions he or she needs to interact with his or her subordinate staffs.

Researchers have shown that stress and conflict arise within organizations due to the lack of communication between managers and employees."

Developing strong organizational communications programs are not easy. As a young Naval Officer I thought the Navy had a pretty good model for communications. You lined everyone up at attention at the beginning of the workday and read the Plan

of the Day (POD). This essentially told everyone what was going on, where, at what time, and who had to be there. After reading the POD, Division Officers would also state other activities specific to their personnel. The POD would be displayed across the ship on various Departmental and Divisional bulletin boards and workspaces. Sounds pretty good right? Well, about the only thing you could count on most people retaining was what was being served for lunch.

Why don't employees listen to managerial communications? Don't they care? Carla Rieger, an expert on change management, writing as director of Yes Education Systems in 2005, states six reasons why employees don't listen:

1. "Short Attention Spans": The message is just too long.
2. "Distractions": From general surroundings or mental state
3. "Lack of Training": Some people never learn to be good listeners
4. "Language Barriers" Diversity in employee population, and managers trying Harvard-speak on high school grads
5. "Assumptions": "I already know what they're going to say."
6. "No reason to listen": The classic what's in it for me?

Can SharePoint help overcome some of these communication hurdles? The answer is yes! The key is to make the content important to employees and focus on empowerment. In June of this year, Bill Gates speaking before a group of 100 Chief Executives at Microsoft Headquarters in Redmond, Washington said: "When we think about information that empowers people, we think about electronic mail. That form of communication is inefficient when

you get to having to make decisions that include groups. Web-based collaborative software leads to direct empowerment of end-users so it doesn't require the time delay and cost of getting things done.” He went on to point out how social networking sites like Myspace and Facebook have become a modern Internet phenomenon with no problems at all attracting people to do what? – Communicate!

With SharePoint's ease of creating team workspaces with calendaring, task management, discussion pages, wikis, document sharing, workflow, and “My Sites” for social networking with Role Based Templates supporting personal photos and profiles, corporate communications can be made relevant, empowering, attention grabbing, and a place where employees can go for information they need to do their jobs. Since team space information is substantially provided by their teammates, company communications are more salient, and with SharePoint's dynamic content management capabilities, they might just even enjoy reading and contributing. Might even be a good place for the lunch menu.

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