



ROYAL ROADS UNIVERSITY

Advance in the workplace

Newsletter: Advancing Professionals In The Workplace

WELCOME NOTES

Welcome to our spring issue of our new corporate newsletter *Advancing Professionals In The Workplace*. This communication has been created to connect with, and offer value to, our growing community of organizational supporters from across Canada and around the world. We hope to keep you informed about new initiatives at RRU, as well as offer you some of the latest business thinking in the areas of leadership, management, and best business practices.

We hope that you will enjoy the publication and find value in the content. Many thanks for the compliments and feedback that we have received to date.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Effective Communications within Organizations

by Bart Mindszenty & Gail Roberts, Associate Faculty, Faculty of Management, Royal Roads University

As specialists, consultants, and instructors at the strategic level of organizational communications, we're always amazed that so many organizations in all sectors seem to have myriad internal barriers to communicating effectively.

These two summaries of studies exemplify the issue:

To earn worker loyalty and appreciation, bosses may need to do a better job. Almost half of companies have failed to effectively explain to employees the purpose of their jobs and the mission and strategy of their businesses, according to a survey by Right Management Consultants and the International Association of Business Communicators™ Research Foundation. Of 472 organizations surveyed worldwide, 48 percent said managers have not effectively communicated the business strategy to workers or translated it to their daily jobs, according to the survey. - The Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Today's manager spends approximately 80 per cent of his or her time communicating – 10 per cent writing, 15 per cent reading, 25 per cent listening and 30 per cent speaking – according to Adlore Chaudier Ph.D., CMC, and VP of the international management consulting firm Runzheimer International.

They're but two of the dozens and dozens of annual internal studies, reviews, and reports undertaken by organizations in all sectors.

In fact, most data that's been collected the past two decades about the relevance, timeliness, and credibility of managerial communications, especially at the mid-managerial/supervisory level, show that there's a consistently large gap between what rank-and-file employees want versus what they actually get. And let's be clear – we're not talking about the methods of communication (though that's important too). We're talking about the content.



In many organizational surveys, rank and file employees list "I don't believe you" (the message and/or the action) as a key bone of contention. Our experience and research has shown that disbelief more often than not is code for "I don't understand".

As well, too often the 'corporate' message delivered by a senior executive literally is just lip-synched by mid-level managers to their staff members.

The Issue: Understanding Why and then How

Communicating effectively is a mix of art and science. It is understanding the issues and needs of the intended audience. It's recognizing that there has to be some kind of mutual connection established, rather than just delivering a message dump. It's knowing when, where and how to deliver the information. And, it's anticipating the challenge to address what's in it for them as well as any concerns. By delivering on those critical needs, employees will be more predisposed to giving management, at all levels, the benefit of the doubt.

Tell, Don't Sell

By helping line managers and supervisors understand what they need to say and do and why – and how, where and when – they'll be more effective communicators, and more effective as feedback resources.

The key, though, is to tell, not to sell. From our vantage point, too much corporate communications is about how thoughtful, good, responsible, fair, important, strategic, and whatever else, some action or inaction will be in terms of impacting employees. Or worse yet, messaging is about why the initiative is good for the company or the shareholders with little or no mention of employee impact.

In other words, the organization's message usually is more upbeat than warranted, and line managers tend to just pass it along if they don't believe it, they don't know how to set the correct context, or they think they're not "allowed" to change it in any way.

What they tend not to do is to take that corporate message and translate it into what it means for the unit, the team, and to each team member, explaining the operating implications as well as the individual implications.

Team members will make up their minds how they feel about 'it' and what they'll do. And if we try to sell them – to seek to convince them of the merits and benefits of the pending change – we're marketing, not communicating.

The goal of every manager at every level should be to explain the environment and challenges/opportunities, to outline the options, to explore the consequences of each option, to engage team members in a constructive dialogue, and then to let each one decide how s/he feels.

Engage and Exchange

If organizations indeed commit to creating environments that are healthy, productive, respectful, and successful, then they'll focus on how mutually effective relationships are created. How they're created is surprisingly simple and eminently achievable if the commitment is strong and sustained.

In short, engage every employee at every level – give all employees a real and clear understanding of the organization's vision, mission, and objectives, in the context of what that means to them and how they do their work. And then nurture a setting that is safe and comfortable for sharing and exchanging views, values, issues, compliments, criticisms, and the whole spectrum of what a thriving workplace is about.

The Bottom Line Benefit

From our observations, studies, and experience, we believe that effective communication at all levels of the organization delivers critical, tangible, business oriented, and measurable results:

- Higher productivity.
- Reduced absenteeism.
- Improved morale.
- Stronger contributions.
- Increased customer satisfaction.
- Improved workplace safety.

Isn't that what all organizations want to achieve? We believe they can.

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COACHING CORNER

The Four Lists of High Achievers

By Philip E. Humbert

This week a client reminded me of something I told her several months back: Life lived to the fullest is always based on what I call *The Four Lists*.

The Four Lists are the guide-posts to success. They are the foundation for achievement, peace of mind, and personal satisfaction. It's simple, really. So simple that we tend to forget them and in our desire for something more complicated, we often miss the oldest trick in the book. Success is based on The Four Lists.

List #1: Your Core Values. Knowing what you believe, what you value, and what you stand for, is essential. Your values are your compass. They are the touchstone against which everything else is measured.

There are hundreds of values that compete for your attention, and it is vital to know which ones are at the core of your life. If you aren't clear about your highest values, your chances for long-term satisfaction and success are greatly diminished. If you aren't clear about your core values, you'll wander forever, lost in a world of endless choices with no clear direction.

Among others, my own short list of primary values includes integrity, loyalty, and "putting in before you take out." I value persistence, consistency and reliability. Curiosity and creativity are high on my list. Encouraging people to fulfill their potential and pursue their dreams is at the core of who I am as a person.

What's on your list? Have you written it down? Have you reviewed it with loved ones, and up-dated it recently? Knowing your Core Values is List #1.

List #2: Your Long-term Goals and Priorities. Where you going and what are are you doing with your wonderful life? What are your five and ten year priorities? What are the big pieces that get your time and your best efforts?

Have you written your goals down, and shared the list with your partners, family and friends? Have you reviewed this list recently and up-dated it at least once a year? Do you know why you're working so hard and how you'll measure success ten years from now? Write your Major Goals down! List #2 is essential.

List #3: Your Short-term Projects. Do you have a spring campaign, or a 6-week project? Highly successful people know their priorities and they work on them every day. They have 30-day targets, and quarterly deadlines. They have a list of items to be completed by the end of the month. What are you working on? How much progress will you make by 5:00 P.M. Friday afternoon?

Highly successful people always work from a written list of short-term projects. They always know the next step, the most important piece of the puzzle, and they don't waste time. What's on your list of projects?

List #4: Your Daily Musts. High achievers maintain a personal list of "practices" they do every single day. These are things like exercise, meditation or prayer, time to plan, and other daily actions that create the life they truly want. My personal list includes an hour to read, and touching base with at least one colleague or loved one, every day.

What's on your "Daily List"? Take care of yourself, every day. Have some fun, every day! Do the things that create and build the life you really want, and do them every single day.

These are the four lists that make life worthwhile. They are the lists that high achievers keep close to their hearts and on top of their desks. They are the lists that guide their actions and inform their efforts. They may be written on simple note paper, but they are fundamental to creating and living the life your truly want. What's on your lists?

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HR TIPS

The Top 10 Hiring Mistakes

For more than 20 years, Vistage speakers and partners *Barry Deutsch and Brad Remillard* have been conducting hires at the executive level and helping companies to improve their overall hiring processes. During that time, they have become keen students of the art and science of hiring.

Recently, Deutsch and Remillard conducted an in-depth study of hiring practices in 134 different companies in the manufacturing, high-tech, distribution, retail and service industries. The study examined 225 executive-level hires to determine what worked well, what didn't work well, and where most companies tend to stumble. Among its many findings, the study identified 10 common hiring mistakes that plague companies of all sizes. Those mistakes (in order of frequency) are:

1. **Inadequate job descriptions.** The job descriptions that drove the hiring process focused solely on experience and skills rather than company expectations for the position.
2. **Superficial interviewing.** The hiring process did not put candidates under the magnifying glass, verify claims or check facts.
3. **Inappropriate prerequisites used too early in the selection process.** An over-emphasis on specific education, technical skills, and industry experience screened out qualified candidates.
4. **Snap judgment.** Hiring teams relied too heavily on first impressions to make final hiring decisions.
5. **Historical bias.** Hiring teams used only past performance to predict future results.
6. **Performance bias.** Failure to understand that interview behaviour and job performance are two different things, which resulted in making an offer to the "best actor," not the best candidate.
7. **Fishing in shallow waters.** Structuring the search to attract only the bottom third aggressive candidates; not actively seeking out selective "sleeper" candidates.
8. **Failure to probe for core success factors.** Not looking for evidence of the five best predictors of long-term success -- self-motivation, leadership, comparable past performance, job-specific problem solving and adaptability.
9. **Ignoring top candidate's needs.** Not understanding what motivates top talent to take a job.
10. **Desperation hiring.** Not budgeting enough time for the search, resulting in shallow sourcing and superficial interviews



Three Causal Factors

In most cases, suggest Deutsch and Remillard, these hiring mistakes are not caused by wilful ignorance or negligence. Rather, hires that fail to produce the desired results are most often the result of a predictable combination of causal factors, including:

- **Inadequate preparation.** The company fails to take the time to outline a detailed, measurable definition of "success" that can be used to source, evaluate and select candidates. Instead, most hiring organizations rely on outdated or insufficient job specs that merely list desired attributes, educational attainment and other minimally useful criteria.
- **Lack of information.** Many hiring managers lack the information and training to hire effectively at the executive level.
- **Human nature.** Interpersonal situations like interviews are often guided primarily by gut feelings. The hiring team that has not been trained to minimize these distractions is easily influenced by preconscious perceptions and nonverbal cues.

The study also identified several other hiring mistakes. Although not as common as the top 10, note Deutsch and Remillard, these pitfalls still manifest themselves far too often:

- Ignoring cultural mismatches.
- Not physically preparing (reception, waiting area, greeting, etc.) for successful interviews.
- Failure to create compelling marketing campaigns to attract top talent to open positions.
- Passive sourcing (waiting for resumes to come in rather than actively pursuing sleeper and selective candidates).
- Lack of preparation for interviews; no written questions.
- Failure to evaluate candidates against an objective definition of success.

"With high-stakes competition for talent at all-time high, companies can't afford to make these kinds of mistakes on a regular basis," caution Deutsch and Remillard.

"The problem is not a lack of desire to hire properly. In most cases it's a lack of replicable hiring methods to improve outcomes."

A Methodology for Success

According to Deutsch and Remillard, all that's required is a structured approach that enables companies to avoid the predictable pitfalls that plague many high-level hires. Based on their experience hiring thousands of executives, Deutsch and Remillard have developed a methodology that consists of eight distinct steps:

1. Build a multi-faceted Success Factor Snapshot to guide the entire search process.
2. Implement a deep sourcing strategy to reach and attract selective and sleeper candidates.
3. Identify and verify success prospects.
4. Create structured dossiers on selected candidates to enable objective, unbiased evaluation and comparison.
5. Conduct Success Factor-based panel interviews using a "magnifying glass" probe methodology.
6. Proactively address and overcome obstacles to hire throughout the entire active interviewing process.
7. Streamline compensation and benefit negotiations through structured interview-based preliminary groundwork.
8. Follow through on the hire with proven transition communication and work style assessment, coaching and facilitation.

"Together," conclude Deutsch and Remillard, "these steps comprise the 'Success Factor Methodology,' a proven process for improving your ability to find, recruit and hire top-level executive talent. Each step in the process requires the full collaboration of stakeholders in all the business units affected by the potential hire. But when you employ the methodology in a consistent and systematic manner, the outcome is a hire with a significantly increased likelihood of long-term success."

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ABOUT ROYAL ROADS UNIVERSITY

Royal Roads University is the only public university in Canada created to address the needs of the global workplace solely through applied and professional programs. RRU offers innovative programs that provide quality education based on the needs, schedules and lifestyles of learners and the demands of the global marketplace. All programs at Royal Roads make extensive use of team-based learning to provide learners with insights into leadership and organizational dynamics and to create a challenging and supportive learning community that fosters personal and professional achievement.

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