

[Kathleen Frith blog February 26, 2007](#)

### **Managers are not organizational salespeople**

Last week I had the opportunity to spend time with Gail Roberts, co-creator of **The Manager Is The Medium**, a training program that teaches managers to think about communications within a strategic paradigm, and co-founder of **Mindszenty & Roberts Communications Counsel**. As a senior communications practitioner with years of experience counseling clients through crisis, conflict and major change, Gail brings experience, depth and insight to any conversation about strategic communications. One of these insights struck me in particular - the concept of achieving 'buy-in' when communicating new initiatives or information to employees.

Gail and her partner, Bart Mindszenty, counsel that one of the major stumbling blocks managers face in communicating new organizational programs, information or initiatives to staff is the manager's perception that they need to achieve 'buy-in' from employees. Oftentimes, managers don't believe themselves in what the company is doing, and therefore feel uncomfortable communicating or 'selling' this news to their direct reports. In other words, if they don't like it, they don't communicate. If we remove 'buy-in' as the manager's objective, we remove this blockage to communication.

When we stop asking managers to attribute values to an organizational announcement - this is good, great, fantastic - and simply ask them to communicate the facts, managers no longer have to sell programs or initiatives they themselves don't believe in. This allows employees to interpret the facts through their own experience and values filters, rather than shoving it down their throats.

This comes as a big 'ah-ha' moment for many managers - employees don't have to like an organizational initiative or program, they simply have to understand it. Acceptance and support is bred from understanding and is a gift, not a given.

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