

HR Insights

Common Employee Communication Mistakes to Avoid

Effective communication is crucial to fostering a positive relationship between employers and employees. It can show employees they're valued and heard, improving employee satisfaction and retention. Conversely, poor communication can lead to workplace inefficiencies, foster employee discontent, and create engagement and retention issues. These concerns can significantly impact workplace productivity and organizational revenue; according to a 2022 study by Grammarly and the Harris Poll, organizations lose about \$1.2 trillion yearly due to ineffective communication. To combat the struggles of poor communication, this article provides an overview of common employee communication mistakes and discusses how to avoid them.

Benefits of Effective Communication

The purpose of employee communication is to keep employees informed. This is important at all levels, from groundbreaking company information to day-to-day interactions. Organizations that effectively communicate with employees may experience the following benefits:

- Increased productivity
- Improved retention
- Greater employee engagement
- Improved workplace safety and crisis management
- Better success rates for change initiatives
- Increased efficiency
- Improved collaboration
- Increased knowledge-sharing and innovation

Common Employee Communication Mistakes

Despite the significant role employee communication plays in creating successful and efficient workplaces, research indicates that many employers still struggle to convey important information to workers effectively. A 2022 report by Gallup found that just 7% of U.S. workers strongly agree that communication at their organization is accurate, timely and open. This can significantly impact company culture, employee morale and performance. The following are common employee communication mistakes employers make:

- Providing infrequent and inconsistent communication
- Failing to understand the employee audience
- Providing irrelevant and impersonal information
- Lacking a clear internal communication strategy
- Not asking for employee feedback
- Using the wrong communication channels
- Overloading employees with information
- Not measuring the effectiveness of internal communications

Improving Employee Communication

There are many ways for employers to connect with employees to enhance engagement, productivity and profitability. The most effective communication strategy is tailored to align with an organization's and its employees' unique goals and needs. Employers can consider the following guidance for effective communication with employees:

- **Identify the goal.** Before sending out internal communications, employers should identify their desired outcome and audience. Overloading employees with information that isn't relevant to them can irritate or confuse them, decreasing engagement. Employers can craft pertinent communications by asking themselves who their desired audience is, why those employees would read this communication, what information they need and what they want their employees to do differently due to the communication.
- **Understand the audience.** Like any sales or marketing email, employer communications should capture employees' attention. To engage employees, employers must write to their desired audience, focusing on tone, transparency and delivery. Employers should also consider their audience when determining the appropriate channels for communication (e.g., companywide meetings, emails, print or newsletters).
- **Ensure effective messaging.** Unclear and inconsistent messaging can do more harm than good. Employers can ensure communications resonate with employees by creating clear, concise, compelling and consistent messages. Personalizing these messages to highlight why employees should care and how these communications will affect them can also boost employee engagement and foster meaningful connections among employees.
- **Create avenues for employee feedback or questions.** Effective communication goes both ways. Employees will be more likely to pay attention and respond to employer communications if they believe their feedback is welcome. Thus, employers can boost employee engagement by creating two-way communication channels. This shows employees their opinions are valued and may have the added benefit of providing employers with new ideas for future improvements. Moreover, employers can foster open communication by allowing time for employees to ask questions or discuss at the end of companywide meetings, conducting periodic and anonymous employee opinion polls, and having an open-door policy at all managerial levels.
- **Measure performance.** The performance of employee communications should be tracked, monitored and evaluated to understand whether these communications are impactful. Employers can use numerous key performance indicators to measure performance, such as reach, engagement, feedback, turnover, alignment with organizational goals and other behavioral outcomes (e.g., benefits utilization and town hall meeting attendance).

Conclusion

Employee communication can significantly impact employer-employee relationships. Organizations that enable better communication among employees may notice improvements to their bottom line.

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