

Touchstones for Change - Communications

Vision and goals:

- Do you have a customer-focused vision and mission statement? Are the organization's vision, values and goals clear to your employees?
- Is the business aim clearly stated? Are progress reports, including financial figures, provided on how it's going? Is the progress toward the goals reviewed with the employees regularly?
- Did employees participate in developing the values and goals?

Internal communications - Are you energizing your employees?

- Do you have communications tools in place and employees trained to use, operate them? Computer network? Desktop publishing capacity? E-mail? Web site? Blogs?
- Does management at all levels understand and accept the critical importance of open and honest communication with employees? Of providing guidance and welcoming feedback? Are conversations on the business encouraged – cafeteria, common areas, drop-in receptivity? Are building trust and enjoying work prime company values?
- Are managers trained in listening, face-to-face communication and coaching skills?
- Is management at all levels attuned to spotting and removing barriers to communication – between departments, groups, individuals? Is backbiting, lack of responsiveness rooted out? Special attention given to communication with employees at remote locations?
- Is necessary training provided, reinforced and updated for all employees? Are employees enabled to work in teams, groups, with positive relationships?
- To avoid misinformation and rumors, is corporate information shared freely and promptly with managers and staff, by methods that continually "beat the grapevine"? Employee newsletter? E-mail? Concurrent departmental meetings? Intranet?
- Are employee suggestions for policies, procedures, innovations, corporate and customer relationships encouraged, acted upon promptly and recognized?
- Without fear or duress, are employees empowered to question operations, stop production, if necessary, until an issue is resolved?

Communications Touchstones – 2

External communications - Are you serving your customers?

- Is customer feedback sought, listened to intently and acted upon? A system for handling, circulating, acting on customer feedback?
- Are employees advised that quality is first, and that responsiveness to customers is a prime responsibility? Do they, can they, act accordingly?
- Do you keep in regular touch with customers, sharing corporate goals, progress, how customer needs are assessed and met? Newsletter, flier, letter from the CEO, employees keep in telephone contact?
- Does top management continually ask, and encourage employees to ask, where is this business headed? What's happening in the world/community that affects our customers? How are our customers' needs changing? How can we better serve them?
- Are customers involved with operations, brought to the plant, allowed to interact with the production of their product, service, treated as partners? Is your marketing continually fresh, creative and inviting? By what means?

Emergency communication:

- Is there are plan for communicating effectively with employees and the public in an unpredictable crisis that could undermine, or strengthen, the reputation of the business?

Overall, is the business fun, satisfying for all?