



HOLD YOUR OWN ANNUAL COMMUNICATION AUDIT

Pricey consulting firms charge companies tens of thousands of dollars to conduct “communication audits”. They come in and interview your employees to figure out where communication is breaking down in the organization. But you can do the same thing for nothing with your team or department of employees.

Once a year, bring everybody together (if you

Before “MISSION ACCOMPLISHED” Define “MISSION CRITICAL”

Identifying “mission-critical” skills that are vital to your organization’s growth (and survival) is a good strategy. But it’s only a start.

Once you’ve got them defined, share them with your employees so they know what they need to learn in order to be productive and valuable.

Analyze your training strategies so you’re teaching people “need-to-know” skills and not leaving anyone out of the running for advancement and career opportunities.

You’ll get stronger talent, and your employees will be motivated to keep mastering and refining their skill sets.



can swing the budget, hold it off-site so that people aren’t distracted by the day-to-day grind). Ask the following questions and encourage people to discuss their answer.

1. **When I communicate, do you generally understand me?** Are you clear about the directions I give?
2. **Do I favor one method of communicating** – such as email, when another method would be more appropriate?
3. **If you could improve one thing** about communication within our team, what would it be?

4. **Do you feel you have enough opportunities to offer me feedback?** Do you feel I am open to that feedback and act on it?

5. **Are the staff meetings informative?** How was the communication during the staff meeting? Are staff meetings held often enough?
6. **Name at least one thing I need to improve on as a manager.**

YOUR GOAL: constructive criticism. To achieve it, you have to create an environment where employees feel comfortable talking openly about your flaws. Start the meeting with a short speech about how you want everyone to speak candidly about any

problems they’re experiencing. Tell them if they don’t speak up with honesty, then they’ve forfeited their opportunity to design a better manager. Let them know in no uncertain terms that there will be no recriminations. In fact, you can even offer a “contract” that *guarantees* this – signed by both you and each employee. Once folks have that piece of paper in their hands, they’ll feel a lot better about participating.

INSIDE ...

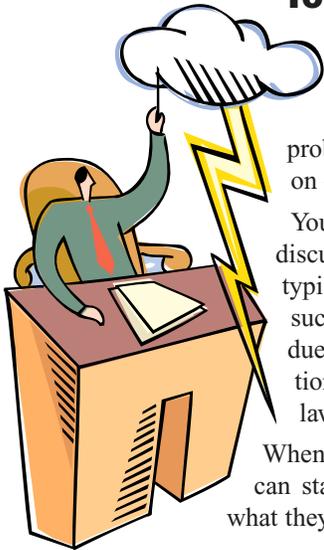
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COMPLIANCE CORNER

ADDRESS TERMINATION UP FRONT To Head Off Problems



Most employee lawsuits spring from issues around termination. You can avoid some, although not all, of those problems by addressing termination early on – even during the recruiting phase.

You and the candidate may not want to discuss terms of termination during what's typically a hopeful time, but negotiating such issues as performance standards, due notice severance pay, and other questions up front can prevent problems and lawsuits if your relationship sours.

When employees know what to expect, they can start out with a realistic attitude about what they must do to succeed.

FOLLOW UP RIGHT AWAY WITH NEW HIRES

For the first month, schedule weekly half-hour meetings with new hires to keep close, answer any concerns, and make sure it's a good fit. If you find during this initiation period that your seemingly "can't miss" prospect isn't working out, take immediate action. When should you let go of a bad hire? Based on one survey, here's how quickly companies reacted after realizing that a hire was a bad match for the position:

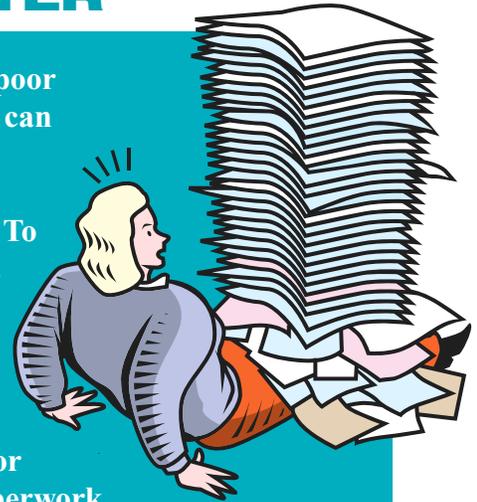
- 6% acted on the first day
- 21% made a decision in the first week
- 22% waited at least a month
- 30% waited at last three months

But a full 80 percent of employers reported that they were able to turn around new employees who seemed to be a bad fit, salvaging a hire. These employers reported using such tactics as:

1. Making specific performance suggestions.
2. Changing the worker's responsibilities or even job title or description.
3. Issuing warnings or using probationary discipline.
4. Placing the employee under the direct responsibility of a coworker or mentor.

SIMPLE RULES FOR REDUCING WORKPLACE CLUTTER

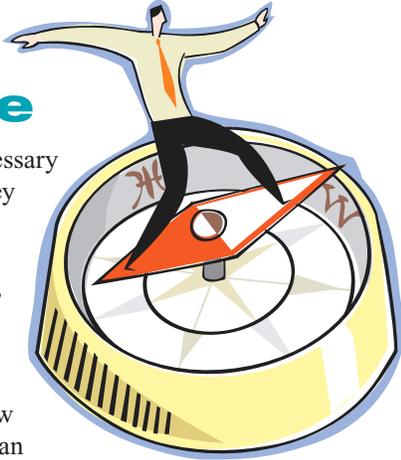
Clutter and poor organization can impede an employee's productivity. To help workers gain control of their workplace, suggest this set of rules for handling paperwork.



- **DISCARD IT.** If you don't need a document – and won't in the future – recycle it immediately so it doesn't clog your desk. But remember, always refer to your department's Records Retention Schedule before records are discarded to be sure you are destroying within the legal guidelines set by your company.
- **TAKE ACTION.** Don't delay if a memo or letter requires you to do something. The sooner it's completed, the sooner you can get rid of it.
- **FORWARD IT.** Pass along important messages, and then delete them. Just don't forward a document for the sake of getting rid of it.
- **FILE IT.** If you're sure you'll need a document, immediately put it someplace safe where you can find it quickly.

HELP EMPLOYEES Through The Various Phases Of Change

Change is stressful but necessary in most organizations as they grow – or when they're just fighting to survive. Some employees embrace change, and some reject it outright, but most go through a process of dealing with it before they can accept a new routine. As a manager, you can walk them through the transition by recognizing these common phases:



- **ANTICIPATION/NERVOUSNESS**

Before plans are announced, employees often worry about what's coming. Give them as much information as you can, as soon as you can, so they know what to expect.

- **CONFRONTATION/REALIZATION**

Once the change is under way, employees have no choice but to deal with it. They may engage or retreat. Your best strategy is showing them consistently how being part of the process will benefit them and the organization as a whole (including their co-workers and customers who rely on your company).

- **DEPRESSION**

Employees may go through a period of "mourning". They may accept the need for change intellectually, but emotionally they're still tied to the past. Don't push them too hard. Show them how things are getting better, but don't downplay the effort of adjustment.

- **ACCEPTANCE**

In time, most employees will come to see that the change was necessary and will get used to the new way of doing things. Acknowledge their progress, and show your appreciation for their commitment.

- **ENLIGHTENMENT**

At some point employees will let go of the previous regime and embrace the new procedures. They may even forget how different things were before. Keep them focused on the future with challenging assignments.

FAMOUS QUOTE

"Listening – The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said."

— Peter F. Drucker,
Management Consultant

SHARON HYDER, CMC, CRM ANSWERS YOUR MANAGEMENT QUESTIONS

The downturn in business has resulted in our company reducing its training budget. We're a medium sized company and the president feels training is a waste of money.

Do you have any suggestions on how to change his mind?

Well-trained employees are a key component for a company's success. However, there are times when training is not the answer. It is important, and often difficult to realize that training may not be the solution to your company's problems or challenges. Your president may believe that the money being spent is not providing a good return on investment.

REVIEW THIS CHECKLIST – training may not be the answer when...

- A skill gap is caused by poor morale or policies, equipment deficiencies, or lack of incentives.
- The time it will take to train personnel is insufficient to meet implementation deadlines.
- Time off for training will result in decreased productivity.
- The new skill needed will be used only for a limited time.
- Company leadership does not show support of the training initiative.
- Training will provide information or rote examples, but will not truly build skills.





TRENDS...

**TECHNOLOGY IS
CHANGING THE WAY
WE LIVE DAILY.**

What might the next ten years bring?

- **STREAMING LENSES** – Data glasses display a stream of online information, from news updates to emails.
- **EXERCISE CLOTHES** – Sensor-equipped exercise clothing tracks the calories you burn.

THE FUTURE IS HERE

VeriChip (CHIP), the company that markets a microchip implant that links to your online health records, acquired **Steel Vault (SVUL)**, a credit monitoring and anti-identity theft company in 2009. The combined company will operate under the name, **PositiveID**.

DID YOU KNOW?

Apple estimates selling 120,000 iPads in the first day, April 2, 2010. Over 1,000 apps are already available for this new device.

- **MOBILE MONEY** – Pay for everything by flashing your cell phone past a scanner, and forget fumbling for change.
- **SMART HOUSES** – You can place a sensor that tracks motion levels, power use, even footstep patterns and sends a message if anything seems amiss.
- **PHONE PROJECTION** – Entertain friends and family with images from your cell phone, displayed on a wall or screen.
- **VIDEO CONFERENCING** – Thanks to online meetings, business travel for just a meeting will be a thing of the past.
- **PHYSICAL VIDEO GAMES** – Remember tennis partners? They're no longer necessary.
- **HEALTH RECORD IMPLANTS** – A tiny chip implanted under your skin holds a unique ID which lets medical personnel access your health records online.
- **DOMESTIC ROBOTS** – Let an electronic helper load the dishwasher or whip up a nice cappuccino.



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