Safety Communications Meeting Kit

WHAT’S AT STAKE

Proper communication is crucial for a job to run safely and efficiently. When communication is insufficient or missing totally there can be many negative consequences for employees and the company as a whole. Recognizing the communication tools for work tasks and the work environment is important.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

COMMUNICATION BARRIERS IN THE WORKPLACE

Physical Barriers. Physical barriers to communication prevent us from being able to physically see or hear the person we are trying to communicate with. Examples of physical barriers include things like walls, distance, noise, and weather.

Psychological Barriers. Psychological barriers to communication prevent us from being able to effectively process or understand the information we are receiving. Examples include things like stress, fear, anxiety, and fatigue.

Semantic Barriers. Semantic barriers to communication prevent us from being able to effectively understand the meaning of the words or symbols we are using. Examples include things like cultural differences, language barriers, and jargon.

Organizational Barriers. Organizational barriers to communication prevent us from being able to effectively communicate due to organizational structures or processes. Examples include things like silos, bureaucracy, and red tape.

Technical Barriers. Technical barriers to communication prevent us from being able to effectively use the technology we are relying

on to communicate. Examples include things like dropped calls, poor signal strength, and broken equipment.

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WORKPLACE SAFETY COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

A Lack of Knowing Leads to Negativity. Low productivity results when people don't have the information or knowledge, they feel they need. The reason is straightforward – people tend to avoid situations in which they will be seen as not knowing, not understanding, or not having expertise. Everyone has a fear – whether based in reality or not – of being embarrassed or mocked.

Employee Mistrust, Absenteeism and Low Morale. Employees want to feel connected to the organization. When they are, they are willing to work harder, smarter. Disconnected employees can profoundly affect business through absenteeism, lack of motivation, and turnover.

Bad Interpersonal Relationships. When people don't feel connected to each other, it opens up the door for misinterpretation and questioning motives and intent.

The "Grapevine Effect". By not sharing information, you ensure a grapevine will sprout – causing problems and distractions. If you aren't talking proactively about important issues to your employees, chances are that someone else is –regardless of the accuracy and truthfulness of their "information."

SOLVE POOR COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

1. **Know the Audience and Their Needs.** The more you know about someone, the better you can listen to them, empathize, support, or guide them in the direction you need them to go. Commit to putting in the work necessary in order to understand the audience and their needs. By understanding and listening intently to employees, you are able to better meet your employees' strategic communication needs.
2. **Communicate The Right Messages at The Right Times.** Focus on

high-visibility, high-frequency communications, setting detailed communication plans that allow for regular authentic and candid conversations with employees.

3. **Frame The Context and Make It Relevant.** Context is key, along with making your messages super relevant to employees. This is achieved when one connects the dots between what you say and what your employees already know by setting context in terms of where your listener is coming from. Bring your communications leaders to the table early when key business decisions are being made.
4. **Use The Right Channels to Communicate with Impact.** The right message, delivered at the right time, via the right channels, goes a long way toward closing communication gaps or addressing communications issues. The list of channels keeps growing. With more options to choose from, leaders need to ensure channels are selected strategically so employees aren't victims of information overload.
5. **Measure Your Communications to Guide Solutions.** Remember, what gets measured, gets done. Measurement doesn't just show the numbers behind your efforts, but can zero in on employee perspectives, how communications are resonating, if they're getting the information they need where they want it.

COMMUNICATION AND SAFETY NEXUS

Proper communication and safety go hand in hand. If no communication safety is missing.

- Training is a way to communicate how to do a task and how to do it safely and is one of the first methods of communication used when preparing for a work task.
- JSAs are important tools to communicate the steps of a job task, the associated hazards of each step, and the mitigation actions to be able to work safely.
- Safety meetings or toolbox talks discussing work tasks and the associated hazards of the work are very important for work crews. Paying attention to the safety meeting information can protect you during your work task that day or sometime in the future.

- Manufacturers put labels on for a reason. They often relay some of the most important information regarding the hazards and safeguards of that product.

SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS TAKEAWAY

- Who is the audience?
- What is the purpose of communication?
- What are the key messages that need to be communicated?
- What is the best way to communicate these messages to the audience?
- How can you ensure that the message is understood and acted upon?

FINAL WORD

Recognize all the different tools used in the workplace to communicate a safety message. When communication is not used to its fullest potential there can be an increased chance for injury. Never be afraid to speak up when it comes to safety on the job.