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EMPLOYEE VOICE IN A PRIVATE MANUFACTURING COMPANY

by

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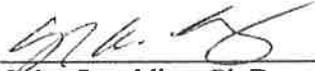
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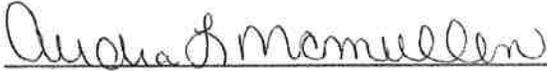
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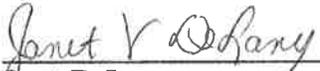
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ABSTRACT

EMPLOYEE VOICE IN A PRIVATE MANUFACTURING COMPANY

Michelle Shry

This study was conducted at Adhesives Research (AR), a privately owned manufacturing organization, to understand what communication practices can help effectively communicate to a wide range of age groups.

The findings from Adhesives Research's 2006 communications survey allow the same researcher an opportunity to re-evaluate the original study results and to also address employee voice, as seen as a trust issue that still exists between employees and management.

The latest analysis indicates ways for the current management to communicate with employees through newer technology, to address the company's vision of recruiting younger employees, and to update AR's strategic communication plan to allow for employee voice.

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Employee voice in a private manufacturing company

Introduction

Email, face-to-face meetings, town hall meetings, publications, monitor postings, Intranet posts, bulletin board postings, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn – all of these communication tools are being used in the corporate setting as ways to communicate to employees. As U.S. adults continue to adopt new communication technology (Pew, 2015), this list of communication options will expand. Not only are the communication tools changing, but so is the workforce. In fact, some employees continue to work past traditional retirement ages, creating an even larger gap between the older and younger generations within companies. As Conrad and Newberry (2012) say, effective communication is the foundation for any type of organization.

How does management know what is the best way to communicate with employees? One way to find out is to conduct a communication survey to learn how employees prefer to receive their information.

In 2006, a communication survey was needed as a strategic tool for a privately-owned manufacturing organization, which was established in 1961, where a unique set of questions evaluated the communication tools being used. To accomplish this, a quantitative survey of employees at Adhesives Research, Inc. (AR) in Glen Rock, Pennsylvania, was conducted on how they perceived the internal communications within the organization, which communication tools they prefer to use, and other noted areas. Adhesives Research is a developer and manufacturer of pressure-sensitive adhesives (PSAs), polymers, tapes, films, coatings, laminates, release liners and drug delivery

systems. It supplies high-performance specialty films, PSAs, tapes, coatings, films, laminates and components to the medical, pharmaceutical, electronics, industrial, and splicing markets.

Adhesives Research has a geographically diverse work force (from as little as five miles from the company to well over 50 miles from the company) spanning the southeastern part of Pennsylvania and in the northeastern part of Maryland. The company also has a wide variety of employees based on age and other demographics (race, gender, education, salary and hourly employees, supervisory and non-supervisory, etc.).

In order to strengthen the relationships between management and the rest of the workforce, communications between the two is necessary to understand the differences between everyone's opinions (employee voice) on the overall effectiveness of internal communications. AR recognizes Chen's (2004) research and fully understands that management is the deciding factor in helping employee communications survive. Analysis of this relationship will help educate the informed decision makers when communicating with the employees. The information will be used to develop a productive relationship within the company as well as overall (improvements between employees and their direct supervisor by understanding what the employees like and do not like). The company was looking for the employees to voice their concerns as well as let management know how communications were overall.

But the 2006 employee survey was nine years ago, and communication has altered radically as social media have taken on larger roles in all American workers' lives, with research showing a tenfold increase in use of social media since 2005 (Pew Center, 2015). This project revisits the 2006 employee survey at Adhesives Research by doing a secondary analysis that focuses on employee voice and employee dissent as expressed when the company surveyed employees.

The researcher, who conducted the 2006 study, continues to work for Adhesives Research and revisits the survey data looking through a 2015 lens that acknowledges the significant changes that in communication tools employees' use. The secondary analysis of the 2006 survey process and its data also will be re-analyzed within the framework of the new management goals of the company, which are to hire more recent college graduates and engage with newer forms of communication that employees use, such as social media. With the recommendations at the end of this research, this secondary analysis can assist new management, a new president and a new chairman, as the company tries to attract younger college graduates and move forward in a socially mediated world.

Literature Review

The 2006 survey provides historical data about the company's work culture. Nine years later, the company still struggles to understand how to integrate the new communication methods that many employees now use. However, it was an important first step to survey employees as part of a long tradition of companies trying to gather information from employees.

Employee surveys have been around since the 1940s and were initially designed to find out about employee satisfaction and morale (Kraut, 1996). Surveys gained popularity as a corporate activity, with about 50 companies conducting surveys in 1944 and 245 companies using surveys by 1947. Kraut also found that as time went on, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, surveys started to expand from gathering satisfaction and morale information to gathering attitudes, preferences, and behavioral observations. Surveys became an important strategic tool to drive and measure organizational changes. To support the research at the two manufacturing facilities conducted by Pettit, Goris & Vaught (1997), Adhesives Research's study also explored how employees perceive the organization's communication style in influencing the amount of satisfaction (morale) the employees receive from the job.

These differing generations tend to use different communication tools, as well as prefer different means of participating in surveys. Church's study (2001) saw the older populations (51-years-old and older) still preferred a hard copy (paper and pencil form) over an online survey (which was preferred by 50-years-old and younger). Each set of age groups gravitates to the tools they are comfortable using – the younger generations have adapted to modern technology (e.g., web-based applications like emails and social media). Knowing the differences between age groups and comfort levels in technology can help management and the communications practitioners to communicate effectively to their audiences.

However, Costanza, Badger, Fraser, Severt & Gade (2012) studied differences in how to treat different generations within a work environment and they found that treating them differently may not be an effective strategy. They believe a better approach is to

develop interventions based on observed differences related to age, maturity, work experience, and individual characteristics when trying to predict how different generations will react within predicting work-related outcomes. In fact, they view these differences in generations regarding different outlooks based on how they each view commitment to the company, as well as, satisfaction, motivation, risk-taking, and leadership style.

How employees perceive their supervisor's communication style, as well as the company's communication systems, will influence the amount of satisfaction (morale) the employee receives from the job (Pettit, Goris & Vaught, 1997). These researchers conducted a survey on 302 employees at two manufacturing sites on organizational communications and their results revealed that job performance has a direct relationship with job satisfaction. Their findings imply that when employees receive proper, accurate, and clear information; then they can perform their job appropriately, leading to job satisfaction (Pettit, Goris & Vaught, 1997).

Conrad and Newberry (2012) shared their findings that leadership's communication skills need to be effective in the workplace including all forms of verbal, written, and technology methods. Also worth noting from their findings is the ability for management to create internal communication programs providing unlimited venues for an open environment for communications to flow.

Chen's (2004) research shows that management holds the key to helping internal/employee communications survive and thrive. He also noted how employee communications have been mostly one way venues where management provides information

on bulletin boards, in stakeholder publications, annual reports, etc., and do not offer a means of input or two way communications. This is not only just a western viewpoint, as Chen has conducted his studies in China and found similarities. The only forms of input from employees he found were in the form of suggestion boxes and town hall meetings where it is perceived by employees as not a genuine concern about the employee's opinions (Chen, 2004). They may provide suggestion boxes, but not necessarily make changes from the suggestions.

The communication surveys have been useful strategic tools for organizations to understand how employees feel about the different communication programs. Gayeski (1993) explains the first step in developing a communication program is to establish an overall policy that should state the organization's general beliefs and values about communication. He adds that better communication will lead to improved productivity and communication policies should be aligned with overall organizational values and goals. Often, the communication professionals will be actively involved in helping top management articulate those values and goals.

Surveys have helped researchers assess and track employee attitudes and opinions over time (Church, 2001) as well as provide important information about what communication programs are going well and which programs might need to be reformatted or removed. Because communication surveys continue to evolve, so has the reporting researchers are finding especially with regards to employee voice. Researchers are starting to see many employees wanting to voice their true opinions in the surveys (Edmonson, 2006). However, they may be reluctant to respond out of fear (whether this is a known fear or an unknown fear) or through dissent (Kassing, 1997) and not

answering questions on purpose as ‘don’t know’ answers (Church, 2001) or by not participating in the survey.

Kraut (1996) has found through numerous studies that the favorable feedback from surveys is accepted by management, but that management handles the unfavorable feedback poorly. Like the stages of grief, management is first in denial about negative feedback from employees. Once management has dealt with the denial, they move into anger, followed by flight, in which management looks to blame other factors for the unfavorable response. If they chose to keep moving through the stages, the next state is acceptance and then, and only then, can management start to look for solutions to the problem.

Employee voice and employee dissent

Kassing (1997) researched employee voice and says dissent is an expression of opinions and concerns about organizational content (agreement, suggestions, argument, and support) and discontent (disagreement, contradictory opinions, and/or divergent views). Dissent could be a useful tool in organizations that value employee involvement and try to find ways to empower their employees. With dissent, Kassing (1997) goes on to provide five reasons for dissent from employees: dissatisfaction with current conditions, advocating a differing opinion from mainstream messages, open protest by voicing opposition/resistance, adversarial/argumentative and issues of principle. He suggests, “certain types of dissent (e.g., displaced) should be present in organizations that neglect employee voice” (Kassing, 1997, p. 328). To be effective when voicing opinions, employees must speak up when

people who are able to address the disagreement are involved directly with the outcomes – where the voice is not going unnoticed.

Church (2001) saw an increase in employees' purposely leaving answers blank (reported as 'don't know' in his study results) more on pen and pencil surveys over more personalized telephone interviewing. He adds that unbeknownst to the participant, skipping questions (leaving them blank) can impact the integrity of survey results.

To help with employees' fear of management, Edmonson (2006) encourages the communication researcher within the organization to build trust between management and the employees by eliminating any adversarial relationships that may exist between management and employees who speak up. She states, "organizations benefit when they can effectively incorporate employee feedback, particularly feedback that challenges accepted practices or policies" (Edmonson, 2006, p. 308). Most voice systems identified in the literature are open systems that identify the employee (e.g., face-to-face communications, email, unions, open-door policies, peer review panels/internal corporate tribunals, arbitration systems, ombudsmen, and performance appraisals).

If employees speak up against management's decisions, they may fear losing their job or fear not being promoted because they are going against the majority. Edmonson (2006) recommends additional research needs to be performed in the area of building trust in the survey process where employees do not have to be fearful of answering the questions truthfully and to eliminate fear of employees who do speak up. She feels the communication practitioner can help their companies create a "safe" survey process for the employees as well as keep the concerns of management in tack.

In organizational settings, Harlos (2001) found an increase in organizations providing voice systems as channels for employees to express their content or discontent. These organizations provided ways to create communications to improve employee satisfaction, decrease turnover and ensure better commitment to the company. Kassing (2002) also found benefits of employees who spoke up about dissent to their supervisors. His findings showed that employees perceive other employees who dissented to management to be more satisfied, that the dissenting employees had a higher quality relationship with their supervisors, and that they identified more highly with their company than employees who didn't speak up, but instead dissented with their coworkers instead.

However, Harlos (2001) found that some organizations are failing at what they thought they were trying to improve. Management turned a deaf ear to complaints, especially sexual harassment and ended up creating more employee discontent. Some cases brought litigation against the organizations, while other discontent led to low productivity and increased turnover.

Morrison & Milliken (2000) found that employees felt if they speak up to management that there will be retaliation, so employees often will not voice discontent to leaders; instead they voice their concerns to other co-workers. These same employees also felt that speaking up would not make a difference, so why bother. The researchers have termed the phenomenon where employees withhold their opinions and concerns because there is a dominant stance by management as "organizational silence." This occurs when employees feel they cannot communicate upwardly to management about issues and problems.

Kassing's (1997, 1998) employee model of dissent found employees use their perceived environment to establish whether or not management will view dissent as constructive or should the employee anticipate retaliation. If employees are noticing that management is receptive to employees' concerns and if they are open to employees' input, then employee dissent could have a positive outcome. Expressing dissent is a complex situation for the employees as well as management. Kassing (2002, 2008) reviewed how to understand the relationship that dissent serves both the employees and management. If employees focus on the cultural climate of the workplace, they may benefit by focusing more intently on considerations that exert the greatest influence on their decisions to express dissent. And management can benefit by designing mechanisms and fostering organizational climates so employees feel comfortable expressing their concerns.

If management wants the surveys to reveal truthful information from their employees, then everyone's voice (the good and the bad) needs to be heard by people who are able to address concerns. Organizations benefit when they can effectively incorporate employee feedback, particularly feedback that challenges accepted practices or policies (Edmonson, 2006).

Ryan and Oestreich (1991) conducted a study of 260 people from 22 organizations and found that 70 percent of them claimed they hesitated to speak up due to fear of repercussions. In their findings, management wanted to ignore that employees have fears (fear of job loss, poor performance reviews, limiting career options, loss of personal credibility, and lack of trust with management) of speaking up (1991). They also noted that how well an employee gets along with his/her supervisor is a key determinant of fear

or can be seen as a way to prevent fear of speaking up at work by having a good relationship with your supervisor.

Although none of the 22 companies that Ryan and Oestreich (1991) visited for their research were in utter chaos from the presence of fear in the workplace, they did find that most organizations are more or less operating satisfactorily. However, the limiting factors with fear in the workplace, keep these companies from being fully successful in their opinion. The way to be successful is if management and employees worked together (without fear of speaking up) to achieve a common goal of quality, productivity and innovation. Eliminate finger-pointing and placing blame with no barriers and problem solving together can bring the two groups to a common ground (Ryan & Oestreich, 1991). In one of the organizations Ryan and Oestreich (1991) researched, managers admitted to punishing employees who challenged the information shared by management - sometimes by transferring the employee to a different department.

Based on secondary analysis of the 2006 survey, this project looks at employee voice and dissent when a company conducts a survey:

- R1: Do employees trust information given to them by the management?
- R2: What are employee's perceptions of communication within the organization?
- R3: What communication tools do the employees prefer management use to disseminate information?

Methods

Adhesives Research (AR), a privately owned manufacturing company, administered an employee survey in 2006 to find out how the organization's communication tools are being used by employees. See Appendix A. The company was evaluating various internal communication tools/venues and wanted to know if all of the venues are: still necessary, effective, trusted information sources, and proper length. The intended goal of the survey was to ensure the communications provided to all employees about the company's mission, vision, core principles, purpose, products, and markets are being well received. Management wanted to make sure that the communications the employees were receiving was helping them stay informed. Kraut (1996) says organizational surveys are conducted as part of a change initiative to collect data and receive feedback where management is involved in the planning phase of the survey as well as involved in the solution from the survey findings.

As a participant researcher at Adhesives Research, the process to conduct a communications survey started in 2005 with management and the communication specialist. Numerous meetings to discuss what and how to survey were held. Next, the researcher planned and implemented a paper and pencil survey of AR's employees about how the communication tools work, where communication barriers exist, the readership of company publications, the level of communication effectiveness, and how employees want to receive messages (email, one-on-one meetings with supervisors, CEO messages, face-to-face meetings, publications, Intranet/online publications, monitor notifications, bulletin board postings, etc.). The survey was sent to all 422 associates (current number

of employees in 2006). See Appendix B for tables of findings about communication methods preferred by employees who filled out the survey.

The company has a very diverse group of employees; males and females in every department, ages ranging from 18 to 68-years-old. Of the total population, two employees were under 20-years-old; 40 employees were between the ages of 20 to 29-years-old; 22 employees were between the ages of 30 to 39-years-old; with 357 employees, the majority of the employees, between the ages of 40 to 59-years-old. Costanza, Badger, Fraser, Severt & Gade (2012) conducted research on generational age groups [like the two extremes of traditional (60s age group) and millennials (early 20s age group)] and found there were not many differences in the work place regarding commitment levels, job satisfaction, motivation, risk-taking, and leadership style. They claim more studies need conducted in this area.

The main impetus for this re-analysis of the 2006 survey and its process was the obvious fear employees had in filling out the survey. Employee fears about the survey sparked this research's focus on employee voice and employee dissent.

What the survey process sparked

Of the 422 employees who received the survey, 138 completed the survey (33 percent response rate). Employees were not asked for their names and it was made clear that all responses to the survey would be anonymous. However, a level of distrust became clear when the surveys were turned in and the evaluation began. Even though it was communicated numerous times that the survey was anonymous and the questionnaires wouldn't be seen by management, quite a few employees did not fill out the demographic

questions in the beginning of the survey or what department they worked in. In fact, some employees changed what department they worked for on the survey so as to protect their identity. In addition to employees unwilling to take the survey, there were numerous refusals from employees to answer questions related to background information from section 1 of the survey. See Appendix A.

Interestingly, the researcher found more fear from the manufacturing employees than among the office employees, but there were fears in multiple areas (fear of revealing who they were in the demographics before even filling out the answers to the communication questions), as well as fear of being honest within the survey questions.

R1: Do employees trust information given to them by the management?

The fact that so few employees felt comfortable taking the survey and that some employees who did take the survey lied about their department indicates a lack of trust from employees. Edmonson (2006) and Ryan and Oestreich (1991) say there is fear in the workplace when employees feel they cannot speak up. When the 2006 communication survey was designed at Adhesives Research, the researcher was unaware of employees' distrust of management and the survey process.

In analyzing what happened with the survey process, it is clear that the 284 employees who chose not to take the survey either distrust management and the survey process, or they have apathy toward giving feedback. This secondary analysis reveals another side to communication within the company - that employees are showing their dissent by **not** taking the survey. The employees feel they have no voice or they distrust management so much they are afraid to give their opinions. Research shows dissent from

employees can mean they are dissatisfied or have different opinions from management (Kassing, 1997). Kassing says dissent is many times present in companies who neglect employee voice (1997).

On the other hand, the 2006 survey did show that employees do trust some information management gives them. Table 2 in Appendix B illustrates that employees trust information given to them by supervisors and by most of the publications at Adhesives Research.

Survey respondents did report that they felt there are an opportunities for employees to talk to management (68 percent); however, survey respondents were self-selecting as the employees who felt comfortable enough to take a company survey. The survey respondents are in the minority at Adhesives Research because 67 percent did not take the survey. Church (2001) and Kassing (1997) say employees may be reluctant to respond out of fear, whether this is a known fear or an unknown fear.

R2: What are employees' perceptions of communication within the organization?

The purpose of the 2006 survey was to assess how best the company could communicate with employees. The survey respondents (75 percent) said communication within their departments was good, but only 22 percent of respondents were satisfied with communication with people outside their department.

A major reason for the company to do the survey was to evaluate the company Intranet, which management wanted to use more. The majority of survey respondents (92 percent) are familiar with the Intranet and how to navigate through it, but almost half of the respondents (49 percent) felt management under-communicated to them. However,

it is unclear what employees at Adhesives Research actually think about communication at the company because 67 percent of them refused to take the survey.

Despite that, the company went ahead with an enhanced Intranet as well as eliminating several publications used to communicate with employees. To turn the Intranet into the communication hub, the company approved funding to upgrade the Intranet. Computer kiosks were purchased and installed for employees to have access to the Intranet. Funds for improved software were also approved for designated employees to be trained to update their department pages. Management felt it was supporting better communication with employees with an upgraded Intranet at kiosks. However, in 2015, most employees have smartphones in their pockets and management illustrated a misunderstanding of current communication tools with its emphasis of computer kiosks rather than the Internet or social media platforms as ways to communicate with employees.

TV monitors in the company also are still heavily used to present event information and highlight safety milestones for employees; however, management does realize this is an old technology. The new president says he plans to eliminate TV monitors and replace them with electronic message boards that have announcements.

R3: What communication tools do the employees prefer management use to disseminate information?

Survey respondents did make it clear what kinds of communication they value. According to Table 1 (See Appendix B), employees want to be communicated to by their supervisor, followed by email, company leadership, group meetings, Strategic Insights,

bulletin boards, Bi-Weekly Updates, the Intranet, and Tape Times. No one wants to be communicated to through the grapevine.

With the lower ranking of the Intranet, which management wants to be the center of communications, the survey did give the researcher some indication of the communication tools that would need to be enhanced. But once again, management will need to give employees more of a feeling that they have a voice in the company if management wants to promote a specific communication tool to employees, like the Intranet.

As Chen's (2004) research has shown, company management is in control of whether internal/employee communications survive and thrive. Adhesives Research reflects what his research found: Employee communications are predominantly one-way communication in which management provides information via bulletin boards, publications, annual reports, etc., and does not offer a two-way communication method that involves employees.

Current employee voice at the company

Adhesives Research employees illustrated organizational silence during the 2006 survey (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Organizational silence is characterized by employees who won't speak up because they fear management retaliation. When employees won't voice discontent to management, they complain to co-workers (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). The apathy that 67 percent of the employees at Adhesives Research who did not take the survey felt is also a form of organizational silence. When employees feel that they cannot affect change, they stay silent. Employee behavior

toward the 2006 survey, whether they took it or not, illustrates that they feel they cannot communicate upwardly to management about issues and problems.

The findings from the Adhesives Research survey are similar to Kassing's (1997, 1998) research on employee voice. Kassing (1997, 1998) explained that companies benefit from dissent when employees can voice opinions and share opinions that might improve the company. In the design of the 2006 survey, neither the researcher nor the company's management knew that employees did not feel they could voice dissent. If the company better understood employee dissent and its positive aspects, this would have been a useful tool that empowered employees, who would have been more likely to take the survey.

Since these 2006 survey results, the researcher continued to communicate to the employees and work with different company presidents and management staff. The Intranet continues to be the hub of communications, and with its new president, Adhesives Research is in the process of transferring the Intranet to a SharePoint Intranet where all departments are now represented and must update their own pages.

Organizational culture changed in 2015 for several reasons – the death of the company's owner and several layoffs that eliminated too many employees. This change in organization allows for an opportunity to change the communication style between management and employees and give employees more voice. Although Adhesives Research will continue to be a privately owned manufacturing company, with new management it can shift its culture to one that is more open to employee voices and foster a communication environment that allows for employee dissent and less organizational silence.

Recommendations

Employee Voice

When employees receive proper, accurate, and clear information, then they can perform their job appropriately, leading to job satisfaction (Pettit, Goris & Vaught, 1997). When employees have job satisfaction and know they can voice their concerns, a climate of organizational silence opens up (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). With employee voice, fear of management dissipates and trust in management can be regained. However, whenever any company's management has a reputation for being abrasive or inflexible, that behavior gives employees a sense of fear (Ryan & Oestreich, 1991). Adhesives Research has a new president who should work to regain employee trust in management. When employees trust management, they will not fear speaking up to management. Not everyone will agree with the way management is operating or communicating, but providing a way for two-way communications where employees have a voice will help build a better company and help improve the "us versus them" outlook of employees about management (Chen, 2004).

A New Survey

Since 2006, there have been two separate layoffs (January 2009 and January 2014), as well as many early retirements and numerous supervisor changes, which have created a different work force and work environment. The researcher recommends an online survey should be conducted in 2016 to reevaluate overall communication within the company. But unlike in 2006, the survey process will acknowledge employee trust issues before the survey is written.

The researcher encourages the company to conduct another anonymous survey done by a third party online service. A third party company will better allow employee voice to be heard, as well as create a safe, judgement free environment to be open and honest in the employee responses. Management must guarantee to employees that those who choose to voice their concerns are not reprimanded. The 2016 survey should be much shorter and should be structured online with additional program logic administered based on the response to a question (e.g., if the employee answers yes, a new set of questions related to that topic appear; if the employee answers no, then the survey moves on to the next question).

Donnelly (2010) understands that by giving employees, at all levels of the company, the ability to voice their concerns on the direction of the company, that they will be more likely to take a personal stake in the organization and feel like a member of the team. He goes on to say that conducting a full scale employee survey is the most recommended method for gaining actionable employee feedback and the survey should include a satisfaction rating on a five-point scale. Donnelly (2010) does recommend that companies need to do something with the feedback they receive so that the employees feel they are being heard. One way to do this is to share results with the company and set up goals for improvements. Typical surveys should have a 70 percent to 90 percent response rate. Recommendations to ensure strong participation include anonymity, providing access to an online survey on a company computer, encouragement from management, and sometimes incentives (Donnelly, 2010). Incentives recommended are not the typical individual incentive, but one where the company offers to donate to a charity based on a certain percent of survey participation from employees.

PeopleMetrics (2009) (a knowledge blog written by management experts who live and breathe customer experiences every day), has found that internal communications is a key component to understanding employee engagement and that employee engagement surveys allow the employee to voice their concerns; leading to a happier employee. They offer five tips for improving survey responses are to ensure anonymity (allowing employees to be honest without fear of retaliation by partnering with a third party administer), strive for convenience (make it easy for every employee – online, mobile-friendly surveys are ideal and offered 24/7 at any location with an internet connection). The other three items relate to management's involvement starting with showcase importance (demonstrate leadership's commitment as well as the importance of the survey by allowing employees to complete the survey during their work day), share the results (two-fold reason, first allows employee voice to be heard as well as allowing the employees to see how others feel). PeopleMetric's (2009) last item is one of the most important tips, make changes. If management does not make any changes from the employee voice or dissent, then employees will feel their concerns are not important and that it was a waste of their time and can affect future participation and cooperation.

Social Media

Until 2015, the organizational culture did not allow for involvement in newer communication technologies like social media; past management did not approve of social media or trust employees to use it wisely. For example, the professional networking website LinkedIn was initially blocked for all employees at Adhesives Research because management felt employees would only use it for searching for a new job. However, human resources employees needed to use LinkedIn for recruitment, so

several employees were un-blocked. Other company employees heard that HR employees had access and more employees wanted access, so the company revised its policy so employees who wanted to be on LinkedIn had to get permission from a supervisor, IT and the president.

In addition, any employee allowed to be on LinkedIn during working hours is not allowed to post to LinkedIn. Adhesives Research has a LinkedIn company page, but it only contains a basic company description. Employees are not allowed to access any other social media sites while at work (no Facebook, no Instagram), and no blogging about or on behalf of the company is permitted.

It is recommended that the company create a detailed social media policy that is discussed with all employees at both the design and implementation stages. That way there is no doubt about what the employee's expectations are. Putting a policy in place will help protect the company as well as the employee. However, as Bennington (2015) notes, many companies are taking a reactive stance by either blocking social media websites or waiting for employees to get caught online and then making an example out of them. The problem with the reactive approach she says (2015) is that by the time the company learns about what happened, the employee has already done the damage. She goes on to recommend better ways to handle social media at work by creating a social media policy so employees know what to expect regarding online behaviors.

Bennington (2015) has recommended that companies should follow her lead with a few best practices to try. For instance, do not ban access completely to social media websites on computers (as most employees can connect from their smart phone), learn

from the best (look to the big companies to see what they have in writing for a social media policy and adapt it to your company), involve your staff (include your employees from the start to get better buy in), keep it simple (if there is too much information, it will be ignored). Other suggestions include “taking it off the page” (make social media part of the company training and new hire orientation so that everyone is aware of the policies), and building company advocates (make the policy easy for employees to be able to understand it and promote it).

Kumar (2015) writes on how it is a bad idea for management to keep tabs on their employee’s online usage claiming they do it so they can stop the employee from inappropriate or illegal behaviors. The author does agree that organizations are within their rights to expect compliance with their employees and common sense social media activity; however, this creates a trust issue between the employee and management. The younger job applicants and employees are savvy when it comes to their online presence and can mask their identity if they feel they are being watched. Kumar (2015) feels an employee or a job candidate needs to be able to trust a company they work for and vice versa.

Hiring Recent College Graduates

Knowing Adhesives Research is now ready to take the company in a new direction including hiring younger college graduates, it is recommended that the company also develop a smartphone policy for employees. Recent research shows that 60 percent of the millennial generation would quit their job if not allowed to use their smartphones at work (MobileIron, 2015). Even though most generations are using smartphones, the

millennials are the group that is on their phone the most (Team CGK, 2015) at all times of the day – including while at work. Team CGK (2015) explains how the millennials are becoming the most prominent group in the workforce (and they claim) they are bringing their phones with them.

Regarding job candidates, Lieber (2015) explains that the best way to attract the younger college students is to be specific and informative. College students tend to focus on jobs that meet specific qualifications they are interested in. The best way to engage college students is to provide as much information as you can about the job. He says that to attract the millennial generation, show them how work-life balance will work for them at your company. This approach is different from how Adhesives Research is currently recruiting to college students. AR has added attended numerous college career fairs over the last few years, but has not shown students this work-life balance. AR has hired a few college graduates and then lost them after they started at the company and saw it was not what they thought was advertised.

One reason Adhesives Research might have lost the recently recruited college graduates is that other than sales representatives, the majority of the work culture does not allow for smartphones during the day. If management sees an employee on a smartphone (other than sales employees or top management), they assume the employee must be texting a loved one or a friend, or they must be on social media...why else would they be on their phone during the day. The researcher sees this as an area for improvement. Yes, some of the older generations, as well as management, will need to understand that the millennials and college graduates are used to researching on their mobile devices and not necessarily goofing off on social media.

The researcher is not picking on Adhesives Research regarding the changing workforce issues the company is facing, but she recognizes other companies are facing these same challenges as well. Once the smartphone technology runs its course, who knows what is in store for connecting to the outside world while at work. Wearables (MobileIron, 2015) is an upcoming market that allows the employee to have access to their smartphone options on their wrist. This technology is called smartwatches. The options for how the millennials and future generations is unknown at this time and if companies can start putting policies in place to help the different generations work on the same playing field, it just might help employees adjust. Everyone needs to face the facts; this world will not be going backwards with technology – only forward. When company surveys were introduced back in the 1920s, who could have predicted there would be an internet, let alone something called a smartphone.... after all, phones are for calling people. The time is now for companies to open their minds to the future instead of blocking access to it.

Limitations to the Research

As a research project, there were some limitations to the study including that only one manufacturing company's survey process and data was re-analyzed. Also, secondary analysis sometimes leads to misinterpretation because the researcher may not know the original context of the data, but in this case, the same researcher did both studies so there was consistency.

The researcher also acknowledges her potential bias as an employee of the company whose survey process was re-analyzed, but that familiarity gives her both a positive (she

wants to help the company) and negative bias (she can see the company's mistakes).

There were time constraints on the secondary analysis method because it was not used at the beginning of the thesis project process, but in the end, the goal was to produce a study that could assist a company in moving forward with its goals in a new communication environment for its employees.

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APPENDIX A

Adhesives Research (AR) Communication Survey

AR offers many different communication tools (email, bulletin boards, monitors, Strategic Insights, Bi-Weekly Updates, the Intranet, etc.) and we want to examine how these different tools are being utilized by all associates. In order for us to improve upon AR's communications, we need your input. **Please answer all questions honestly and return to HR. All information is confidential.**

Section 1 – Anonymous employee questionnaire

1. Your employment status and gender:

Full-time _____ Part-time _____ Hourly _____ Salaried _____
 Male _____ Female _____

2. Which shift do you work?

A) 1st shift B) 2nd shift C) 3rd shift

3. Which region do you work in?

- A) Glen Rock – on site
- B) Glen Rock – home office (off-site)
- C) Europe
- D) Singapore

4. Select a department that closely matches your current job position:

A) ARcare

Specify area: R&D / Sales / Quality / Analytical / Operations/ Shipping & Receiving

B) ARclad

Specify area: R&D / Sales / Quality / Operations/ Shipping & Receiving

C) ARx

Specify area: R&D / Sales / Quality / Analytical / Operations/ Shipping & Receiving

D) ARmark

Specify area: R&D / Sales / Quality / Operations

E) Shared Services

Specify area: Facilities and Maintenance

Finance/ Purchasing / IT

Human Resources / Legal

Marketing / Commercial Development

Other: _____

5. Are you a supervisor? Yes _____ No _____

6. How many years have you been employed with AR?

A) 0-5 years B) 6-10 years C) 11-15 years D) 16 or more years

Section 2 – Communications Evaluation - Please rank how you view the following criteria based on a scale of 1 to 4 where:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Agree and 4 = Strongly Agree

Company-wide Communications

1. Overall, I am satisfied with communications at AR? _____
2. I usually hear about things through the “grapevine” before a general announcement is made. ____
3. Company-wide announcements are communicated in a timely manner. _____
4. I am informed about company information I believe everyone should know. _____
5. I am always informed about the latest company news. _____
6. I know what the company objectives are short-term (1 year) and long-term (5-10 years). ____
7. The company mission, goals, and plans are communicated well so that everyone can work towards the same objectives. _____
8. The company does a good job of keeping everyone well-informed about how well we are progressing against our mission, goals, and plans. _____
9. I am up-to-date on the major projects ongoing in the company. _____

10. A good way to communicate with me is by announcements on the bulletin boards. ___
11. A good way to communicate with me is through email. _____
12. AR uses good communication tools to broadcast information. _____
13. AR procedures and guidelines are written so that they are easily understood. _____

Department to Department

14. There is respect between departments at AR. _____
15. The procedure for handling product problems between departments is well-defined and easy to follow. _____
16. The information that is communicated to me from other departments is generally accurate. _
17. I receive information from my department at the same time other departments receive the same information. _____
18. AR employees make “good” communications a priority in their jobs. _____
19. I believe my opinions are considered when a decision is made that affects me. _____
20. I have all the information I need to do my job effectively. _____
21. My supervisor communicates with me about everything I need to know for my job. _
22. When I communicate problems, they are received in a positive manner. _____
23. Good communications with other departments is an important part of my job. _____
24. Improved communications department-to-department would help improve my job performance. _____
25. Opportunities exist to meet with other departments and discuss various problems and situations. _____

What would you recommend to help company-wide communications or department to department communications? _____

Which information items are very important in order for you to do your job? Check all that apply.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> AR's strategies for the future | <input type="checkbox"/> Products and services of AR |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overall financial picture of AR | <input type="checkbox"/> AR's capabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications process | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compensation and bonus programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Technology departments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Issues and trends affecting our business | <input type="checkbox"/> Key customer business issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AR success stories | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community involvement | |

What other topics do you feel are important for you to know more about and would like the company to include in future communications?

How believable are these sources to you about things going on at AR? Please rank how you view the following criteria based on a scale of 1 to 4 where:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Agree and 4 = Strongly Agree

- Letter from the CEO
- Meetings with Supervisor
- Emails from Supervisor
- Email from HR (sent to AR Global)
- Via the Grapevine
- Email from others (sent to select individuals who need to know)
- Meetings with executives
- Intranet
- Corporate website
- Bi-Weekly Updates
- Strategic Insights
- Bulletin Boards
- Monitors

Section 3 – Different Vehicles of Communications – the chart below explains the purpose, frequency, content and distribution of Strategic Insights, Intranet, CEO message, Bi-Weekly Updates, Tape Times, Face to Face Meetings and the Bulletin Boards for how we are currently communicating. Please look over the chart and then answers the questions that follow.

TOOL	PURPOSE	FREQUENCY	CONTENT/ DESIGN	DISTRIBUTION
Strategic Insights Monthly Shaped Message	Strategy/Reinforce Goals/ Division & Function Briefs/Financial/ Profit Growth	Monthly	1/2 - 1/4 pg. per GM/Functional leaders	Hard copy flyer via supervisor Intranet link
Intranet www.arglobal.com	Primary Communication Center	Daily/weekly	Branding graphics	Links on intranet
CEO Message	Company updates	Monthly/ As needed	Strategic Insights/ Intranet (President Message)	Strategic Insights Intranet front page
Bi-Weekly Updates	HR-Associate notices Short term items	Bi-weekly	HR-People items Safety Announcements Special events Entertainment Shop and Swap	Link on intranet (send via email link to intranet)
Tape Times	News of last quarter (more general) people, recognition	Quarterly (Feb/May Aug/Nov)	Photos, news of last quarter (more general) people, recognition	Hard copy in mailbox & lunchrooms, PDF version on intranet
Face to Face Meetings	Communicate/ reflect goals, strategies & progress	Minimum one per month	Supervisor updates to associates	Face to Face
Bulletin Boards	Communicate announcements	On going	HR information Legal Bulletins	HR postings

From which of the following sources **do you now receive** most of your information about what is going on in AR? Put an “x” at your **top three information** sources only.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grapevine | <input type="checkbox"/> Bulletin Boards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My supervisor | <input type="checkbox"/> email |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Company leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Group meeting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intranet | <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Insights |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tape Times | <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-Weekly Updates |

From which of the following sources **would you prefer to receive** most of your information about what is going on in AR? Place an “x” at all that apply.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grapevine | <input type="checkbox"/> Bulletin Boards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My supervisor | <input type="checkbox"/> email |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Company leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Group meeting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intranet | <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Insights |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tape Times | <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-Weekly Updates |

Please rate the following communication vehicles based on your current opinion.

How often do you read/review the following: (fill in one check mark for each item)

	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Skim	Never Read	No access	Comments (Optional)
Tape Times							
Strategic Insights							
Bi-Weekly Updates							
Intranet							
Monitors							

What is your overall evaluation of these tools: (fill in one check mark for each item)

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	No Access	Comments (Optional)
Tape Times						
Strategic Insights						
Bi-Weekly Updates						
Intranet						
Monitors						

Frequency: Evaluate the frequency of each of the following: (fill in one check mark for each item)

	Just right	Would like more often	Would like less often	Do not have access	Optional: suggest how often
Tape Times <i>Quarterly</i>					
Strategic Insights <i>Monthly</i>					
Bi-Weekly Updates <i>Bi-Weekly</i>					
Intranet <i>Daily/Weekly</i>					
Monitors <i>Weekly/Monthly</i>					

Please rank how you view each communication vehicle based on a scale of 1 to 4 where:

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Somewhat Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree

Tape Times	Strategic Insights	Bi-Weekly Updates	Intranet	Monitors	
					Believable
					Helps me know what is going on within the company
					Helps me do a better job
					Issued too often
					Hard to understand
					Makes me feel appreciated
					Well written
					Company mouthpiece
					Only recognizes the top people
					Attractive
					Contains important information
					Contains interesting information

Comments regarding:Tape Times
_____Strategic Insights
_____Bi-Weekly Updates
_____Intranet

Monitors _____

How often do you visit the Intranet? (www.arglobal.com)

 Daily Weekly Monthly Never Do not have accessAre you familiar with the Intranet and how to navigate through it? Yes No

What do you like most on the intranet? _____

What could be improved? _____

In general, do you feel you are being **over**-communicated to? Yes NoIn general, do you feel you are being **under**-communicated to? Yes No

How often do you check your email? (on a typical day)

 all day long 1/2 a day once or twice a day neverDo you feel there are opportunities available for you to express your ideas to upper management? Yes No (if No, why?)
_____Do you feel there is good communication in your department? Yes No

Do you feel there is good communication between people in different areas of the company?

 Yes NoDo you know AR's mission statement? Yes NoDo you know where to find AR's mission statement? Yes No

Do you know AR's goals for FY07 – FY09? Yes No

Do you know where to find AR's goals? Yes No

Thank you for participating in the Communications Survey. We appreciate your input.
Please return this completed form to HR.

The surveys will be compiled and the results and recommendations will be shared with
AR within a few months after the forms are returned.

APPENDIX B

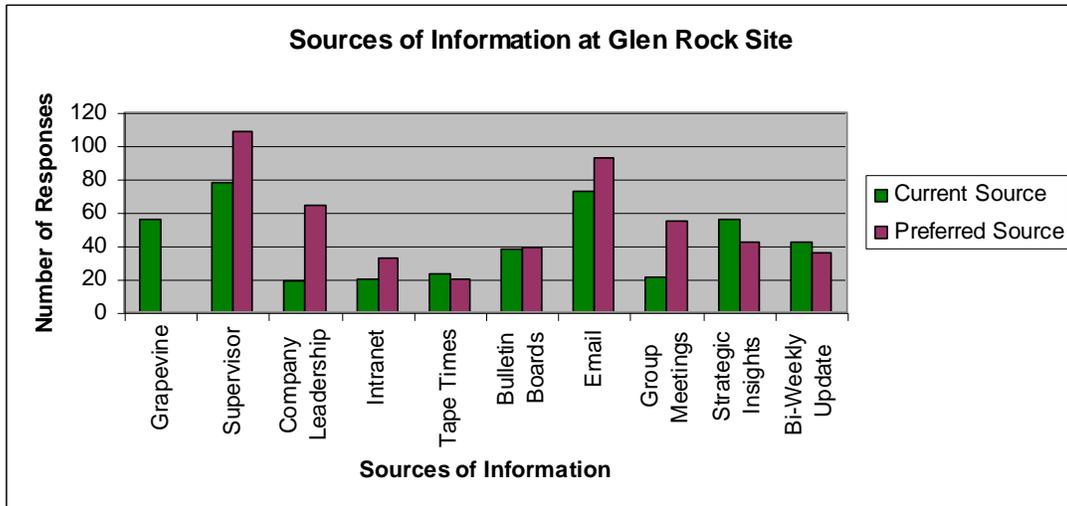


Table 1 shows current sources of employee communications versus how employees prefer to be communicated to.

Average Glen Rock Rankings by Publication					
	Tape Times	Strategic Insights	Bi-Weekly Updates	Intranet	TV Monitors
Believable	3.57	3.36	3.43	3.36	3.29
Helps me know what is going on within the company	3.07	3.33	3.09	3.03	2.82
Helps me do a better job	2.24	2.64	2.20	2.35	2.10
Issued too often	1.75	1.86	1.93	1.73	1.93
Hard to understand	1.53	1.72	1.58	1.66	1.77
Makes me feel appreciated	2.55	2.27	2.17	2.11	2.04
Well written	3.30	3.17	3.08	3.14	2.86
Company mouthpiece	2.99	3.19	2.76	2.96	2.70
Only recognizes the top people	2.36	2.72	2.34	2.49	2.31
Attractive	3.27	3.08	2.73	2.91	2.59
Contains important information	3.01	3.40	3.00	3.11	2.89
Contains interesting information	3.33	3.21	3.08	3.02	2.80

Table 2 shows the results of all the communication publications at Adhesives Research and how employees ranked each of them.

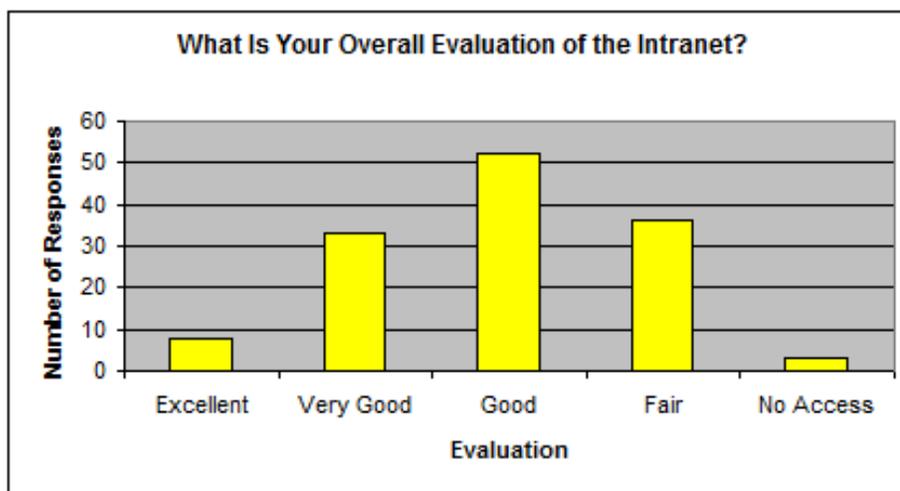


Table 3 shows the overall results of employee's impression of the Intranet.

General Communications Approval	Glen Rock Average
1. Overall, I am satisfied with communications at AR	2.80
2. Usually hear about things through the “grapevine” before a general announcement is made	3.03
3. Company-wide announcements are communicated in a timely manner	2.88
4. I am informed about company information I believe everyone should know	2.93
5. I am always informed about the latest company news	2.79
6. I know what the company objectives are short-term (1 year) and long-term (5-10 years).	2.90
7. The company mission, goals, and plans are communicated well so that everyone can work	2.76
8. The company does a good job of keeping everyone well informed about how well we are progressing against our mission, goals, and plans.	2.73
9. I am up-to-date on the major projects ongoing in the company	2.79
10. A good way to communicate with me is on the bulletin boards	2.33
11. A good way to communicate with me is through email	3.58
12. AR uses good communication tools to broadcast information	3.04
13. AR procedures and guidelines are written so that they are easily understood	2.73
14. There is respect between departments at AR	2.48
15. The procedure for handling product problems between departments is well-defined and easy to follow.	2.29
16. The information that is communicated to me from other departments is generally accurate	2.81
17. I receive information from my department at the same time other departments receive the same information	2.57
18. AR employees make “good” communications a priority in their jobs	2.46
19. I believe my opinions are considered when a decision is made that affects me	2.77
20. I have all the information I need to do my job effectively	2.80
21. My supervisor communicates with me about everything I need to know for my job	3.05
22. When I communicate problems, they are received in a positive manner	3.00
23. Good communications with other departments is an important part of my job	3.57
24. Improved communications department-to-department would help improve my job	3.51
25. Opportunities exist to meet with other departments and discuss various problems and situations.	2.59

Table 4 shows averages reported on specific communication questions.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Michelle Shry
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

Communications Management
 Master of Science, 2015

West York High School, York, PA
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Promotions Producer/Writer/Events Coordinator (1991-1999)
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