

Executive Communication for Staff Engagement – Handy Hints

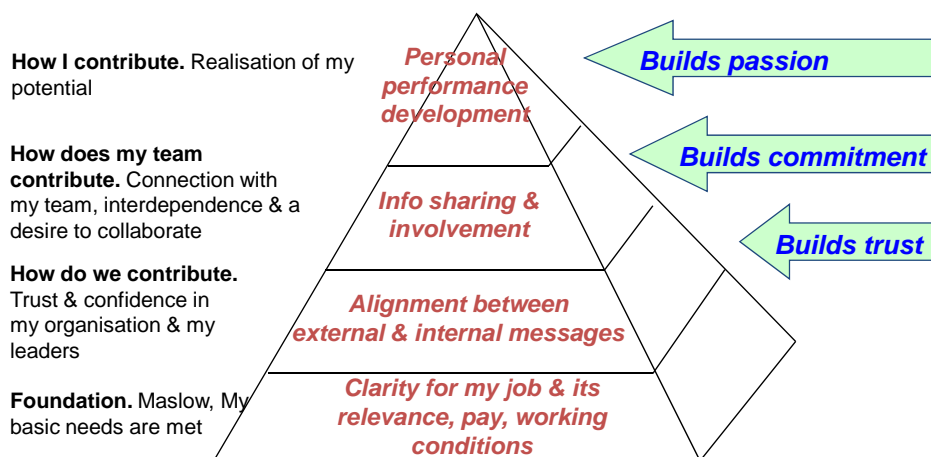
It is sometimes a challenge for executives (no matter how good an executive leader is) to communicate and engage frontline staff through the middle management (clay layers), if the middle management team are not good leaders themselves. It is with this background, we find that best practice communication and staff engagement is often where strong middle management exists from the strategic customer centric organization, led from the top.

At both the middle management and executive levels, employee communication is about cultivating a relationship with employees – and this is the heart for effective staff engagement, where this forms a basis for

- Building trust and aligning employees to the vision (the desired picture of the future), strategy & goals (how to reach for the vision) and values (what's important for the organization)
- Motivating and managing performance (in our earlier handy hints - a high performing work culture was highlighted as being critical for staff engagement)
- Building team commitment and synergy and interdependence behavior between employees
- Identifying and resolving issues before or as they arise.

An example communication hierarchy for Staff Engagement is below. It describes through the Maslow hierarchy of needs analogy: that assuming the staff job roles and working conditions are clear, the engagement of individuals (the top of the pyramid) is built from ensuring confidence in my organization and my leaders, and knowing how WE contribute as an organization and WE as a work team contribute. This builds the trust and commitment, that provides a conduit for passion at an individual level for effective staff engagement.

Communication for Staff Engagement Hierarchy



Executive managers also need to set the right climate for all staff to engage in communication. A few pointers for competency development of newly appointed executives and those who are already established for honest reflection are:

- Fostering a communicating culture based on a level of trust, commitment and ‘walking the talk’ or involvement by executives being good role models, leading by example, having good listening skills and creating the desire through relationships building for staff to engage in a positive reinforcing culture.
- Developing, maintaining and sustaining effective communication systems. Interactive communication is multi-faceted and dynamic (up, down across), beyond the standard 2 way formal communication channels. This communication needs to deliver information, solicit feedback, demonstrate management responsiveness and encourage involvement.
- Managing communication. Set communication priorities that drive communication agendas.

A good practice Staff Engagement matrix is shown below. The message here is, buy-in for staff engagement has 5 foundations for success. **Vision** (without organizational vision there is confusion), **Plans** (without organizational alignment and knowing how we fit in and contribute- there will be anxiety), **Resources** (without adequate resources and support- staff get frustrated), **Ability** (team and leadership competencies and desires in use, without these there are start/stops or false starts) and **Reinforcement** (without constant leadership behavior and role modeling, staff engagement will short term). Effective staff engagement can only progress when all 5 foundation are in place.

Benchmarking Partnerships		BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK				
		Good Practice matrix for Staff Engagement				
Vision	Plans	Resources	Ability	Reinforcement		
X	✓	✓	✓	✓	Confusion	
✓	X	✓	✓	✓	Anxiety	
✓	✓	X	✓	✓	Frustration	
✓	✓	✓	X	✓	False Starts	
✓	✓	✓	✓	X	Short Term	
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Progress	