Chapter 11
Employee Relations

Troubling workplace trends

•Due to corporate productivity pressures and belt tightening, workers face uncertain futures.

•Cradle-to-grave employment is a relic of the past.

•Workers have become more vulnerable, brittle, and suspicious of management.

That's why, in the 21st century, there is no job more important than employee relations!

Strong employee relations equals solid organizations

- Companies that communicate effectively with workers financially outperform those that don't by up to 57 percent.
- The value of "intellectual capital" has increased.
- Employees are the most important assets in the organization.

Dealing with a diverse employee public

❖There is no single "employee public."
An employee public comprises numerous subgroups, each with different:
- interests
- wants
- issues
- concerns

❖Smart organizations tailor messages and media to reach each specific subgroup.

❖ Looking at the demographics.... in general, today's employees are:
- Younger
- Increasingly female
- More ethnically diverse
- More ambitious and career oriented
- Less complacent
- Less loyal to the company

Communicating
effectively in a sea of doubt

Any organization concerned about getting through to employees must offer them:

- Respect
- Honest feedback
- Recognition
- A voice
- Encouragement
- ❖ According to Milton Moskowitz, coauthor of the "100 Best Companies to Work For in America," six criteria have stood the test of time. Therefore, an organization also must offer employees:
- A willingness to express dissent
- Visibility and proximity of upper management
- Priority of internal to external communication
- Attention to clarity
- A friendly tone
- A sense of humor

5   **MAR205**

Credibility: the key

For employees, it all comes down to one simple word:
Credibility.

Employees want:

- managers to level with them.
- facts, not wishful thinking.
- the truth, especially in person.
- to know how they're doing.

6   **MAR205**

Building Trust

Q: How can management build trust among its employees?

- Level with employees
- Encourage face-to-face communications between supervisors and subordinates
- Communicate earlier and more often
- Share not only good but also bad news
- Involve employees in the management process by seeking their opinions and their ideas
- Share the vision of the business, showing employees how they can contribute to it
- Demonstrate how the vision can be lived daily in the way everyone performs their job.
- By creating communications that are:
  Strategic; Honest; Open; Consistent (SHOC)

MAR205

Employee communications tactics......

Once objectives are set, a range of tactics can be adopted to reach your employees. Let's take a look at them:

Internal Communication Audits

This is one of the best forms of research to lay groundwork for employee communications. Ask:

1. How do internal communications support the mission of the organization?

2. Do internal communications have management's support?

3. How responsive to employee needs and concerns are internal communications?

Audits help determine staff attitudes about their jobs, the organization, and its mission.

MAR205

Employee communications tactics…(cont'd)

The Intranet

This is like a specialized "Internet" just for employees.

When designing a site, remember:
- To consider the culture.
- To set clear objectives and then let it evolve.
- To treat it as a journalistic enterprise.
- To market, market, market.
- To link to outside lives.
- That senior management must commit to it.

Employee communications tactics…(cont'd)

Print Publications
- Although many have moved to the company intranet, publications still play an important role.

- Desktop publishing gives internal editors greater control of design, layout, and illustrations.

- Many entry-level PR practitioners will work on writing and editing employee newsletters.

Employee communications tactics…(cont'd)

Employee Annual Reports

- It often makes sense to print a separate annual report just for employees. It is written for, about, and by the employees.
- The annual report is a good place to discuss organizational issues informally yet candidly.
- The annual report can be factual, informational, and motivational.

Employees appreciate recognition – and that's what this publication delivers. Employees will notice it and read it.

Employee communications tactics…(cont'd)

Bulletin Boards

- One of the most ancient of tactics, it has made a comeback in recent years.

- Boards are now being used to improve productivity, cut waste, and reduce accidents on the job.

- They are repackaged into a more lively and visual medium.

- Be sure and keep your bulletin boards current. One person should be assigned this task.

Employee communications tactics...(cont'd)

Suggestion Box

They can still work well. You must make sure that managers will read the suggestions and act on them.

Town Hall Meetings

These are large gatherings of employees with top management, where no subject is off limits. Open dialogue is the goal. Don't screen questions from the crowd!

Employee communications tactics...(cont'd)

Internal video

• These can be highly effective. Consider the impact of a 10-minute video of an executive announcing a new corporate policy, compared to print or audio.

• Burger King, Miller Brewing Co., Ford, and Southwest Airlines have all used internal video successfully.

• First, examine internal needs. Second, plan thoughtfully. Third, produce the best quality video possible.

Employee communications tactics…(cont'd)

Face-to-Face Communications

- More than anything, employees want information face-to-face from supervisors.

- In fact, 90 percent of employees list supervisors as their preferred source of information.

- The value of meetings with supervisors lies in their regularity and the candor that supervisors bring to them.

15   **MAR205**

The grapevine

- It is a source of rumor and can sometimes be a dominant employee communication vehicle.
- More often than not, it is a vehicle used by employees to dig out facts that management may not have been willing or ready to share.
- Management can use the grapevine and should do so primarily because of the value employees place on it.
- One reason that employees tend to create, use, and like the grapevine is because management rarely explains the process followed to reach a decision on a pressing issue.
- ❖ Review Questions:
1. Why is credibility important for employees and how can management build trust among its employees?
2. What is the "grapevine," and how is it used in employee communications?

16   **MAR205**