

# Organizational Success

## 7 Traits of High-Impact Comms Programs

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The success of your organization hinges on its ability to keep employees, board members, volunteers and other internal stakeholders informed with timely, transparent and truthful information. That's because informed stakeholders can take actions that best support your organization's goals.

Reflecting on our combined communications experience totaling more than 70 years, we've identified seven common traits of every high-quality internal communications program:

**1. Research and measurement** — Your internal comms program includes regularly scheduled surveys, focus groups and town halls. These are the dashboard dials that enable you to identify the issues your employees care about and gauge their reaction to the information they receive from your organization.

**2. Transparency** — There are strong reasons why an organization can't reveal *everything* about its operations, even to its employees. For example, a certain food company wouldn't want its secret recipe to become public knowledge.

An electronics company wouldn't want its competitors to know how it created its new chip. A publicly traded company is not legally allowed to discuss merger rumors or reveal its financial performance before its quarterly earnings announcement.

However, some organizations develop such a strong habit of keeping secrets,

they don't reveal *anything* to employees. They throw a veil of secrecy around even the most mundane decisions, leaving employees in the dark about everything.

For example, a firm might decide to shut down one department, worksite or retail location without explaining the reason. Sales might be lagging for a specific product, a lease has expired, an expansion is planned elsewhere or foot traffic has become too slow.

Regardless of how bad the news is, it's crucial to include the reasons. Employees will have more tolerance — and are less likely to quit — if you provide them the rationale for a decision. Sometimes this requires C-suite courage. Help executives to appreciate the value of transparency and how it's related to trust.

**3. Technology investment** — Your organization invests in not only computers, but also webcams, high speed internet connectivity and a high-quality virtual meeting platform. You enable your employees to meet and exchange information from the comfort and safety of their homes.

Even as the pandemic wanes, ensure your organization doesn't lose all that it's learned about managing virtual work. It can be a competitive recruiting advantage.

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**4. Tied to mission/goals** — Your communications serve one purpose: supporting your organization's mission and goals. For instance, your articles subtly point out the connection between the story being told and the mission. If there is no connection between a suggested communication and the mission and goals, it becomes an easy decision: Don't bother publishing it.

**5. Interesting stories** — Readers expect their communications to include entertainment value, reflecting their own experience on social media. This might sound difficult to achieve, but it's not.

For instance, are you writing a profile about a new executive who's joined your organization? Include personal details, such as their first job, how they

got started in your industry, their hobbies and anything else of interest.

**6. WIIFE** — If there's any benefit to employees from a story you're writing, make sure you highlight that. The first thing any worker wants to know is “What's In It For Employees?” (WIIFE). Has your organization received some new funding, sold a unit or had a great quarter? As a result, will annual bonuses be higher this year? Trust us, lead with that fact first.

**7. Two-way communications** — The days of top-down communication and the “Employee Suggestion Box” are over. Your program should include one or more ways employees can communicate directly to management without a filter.

People expect the ability to comment or deliver feedback. They want their voice heard inside the corporate walls the same as their voice is heard on personal social media channels.

The place where you're working might not currently have all seven of these traits, but they can serve as aspirational goals. ■

### In Brief



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Street Journal reports. For many employees, wage increases haven't kept pace with the rising cost of living.

Chief financial officers consider different factors when determining compensation budgets, including whether they can

### To Limit Pay Raises, Companies Offer More Perks

As inflation soars and employees resign in record numbers, many companies are offering perks such as vacation time and permanent work-from-home options with the hope of retaining workers without boosting salaries, *The Wall*

pass along higher salary costs to customers. “I'd love to pay everybody as much as possible, but I also need to make sure the company remains competitive,” said Chris Cage, CFO at government contractor Leidos Holdings. Leidos offers its employees financial-counseling services and some can work from home permanently.

Companies will likely have to raise employee pay to keep up with inflation, said Jason Furman, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics. “Workers are going to demand more,” he said, “and businesses can afford to pay more because ... their products are selling for more.” — Greg Beaubien



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