



## INTERNAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM & MATRIX

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## Communication Matters

Communication matters. In fact, communicating with employees is one of the most important things you do as a leader.

Research shows that people derive greater satisfaction from their jobs and perform to a higher standard when they are engaged in their workplace. Effective communications is an essential feature of engagement.

Communicate effectively and you'll have a more fully engaged and more productive workforce.

This guide provides very practical suggestions to help you decide how best to communicate with staff in different situations. Keep it handy.

You can learn to communicate effectively with your staff. It takes some planning. It takes practice and commitment. It's a skill you can continue to hone.

Internal communications is critically important, but it isn't impossible.

### Internal Communication Statement

Recognizing that its employees are its most valuable resource and are entitled to quality internal communications, it is the standard of the City of Kannapolis Parks and Recreation Department to keep all employees informed and up-to-date about department initiatives, plans and progress, human resource developments, and overall departmental progress through a comprehensive internal communications process.

### Statement of Principle

Any organization's greatest resource is its people. The City of Kannapolis Parks and Recreation Department is no exception. The people who make up the department's workforce are responsible for turning decisions made at City Council something real, something tangible for the people of this City. Our staff make it possible for the citizens of Kannapolis to enjoy clean parks, programs, entertainment, athletics, greenways, clean air, and a myriad of other essential pieces of the quality of life puzzle.

It is in the interest of all citizens that the department employees are committed, productive and conscientious. For employees to actually be committed, productive and conscientious, they must feel valued. A combination of factors contributes to the employee's sense of value, and one of these – effective communication – is absolutely essential.

From a communications perspective, employees feel appreciated and valued when

- they are the first to hear important news,
- they are regularly consulted,
- they are listened to,
- their suggestions are acted upon.

Principles of effective internal communications

- Internal communications is essential to the government's overall effectiveness.
- Internal communications is a responsibility of a department's management; not its communications section. Communications can, however, provide managers with guidance and coaching.
- Internal communications is meant to help inform decision making and influence employee behavior in ways that benefit government, the public, and employees themselves.
- Internal communications consists of accurate, consistent, and timely information.

- Internal communications is always two-way communications. Employee feedback helps managers decide if the communication has been received and understood. As well, employees have important operational information that can help to make the department more successful in achieving its goals.
- Internal communications never stops. It is a continuous interactive process.

### Why Communicate?

Effective managers and supervisors already know a few things about communicating with employees. Communication helps to build relationships, promotes mutual understanding, and enables employees to contribute to organizational success. Moreover, it's a skill that can be learned – but it takes practice.

Effective managers and supervisors also know that communicating with employees is not solely the responsibility of the organization's professional communicators; any more than managing their office's budget is the sole responsibility of the organization's finance professionals. The communications folks can help and can provide advice, but the "heavy lifting" remains the manager's responsibility.

### The Role of the Manager and Supervisor

Studies have long shown that employees prefer to receive information from their supervisors. They like to get the "big picture" information from the organization's leaders, but they want to hear the impact on their workgroup directly from the people to whom they report.

For many types of information, employees also prefer to receive news face to face. This allows for interaction and a chance to close the communication loop: the supervisor "sends out" the message, the staff receives it, and their reaction or response shows if they understand and accept the information.

### How and When to Communicate

The challenge for managers and supervisors is to find the time and the most effective methods for communicating information in a timely and open way to their staff. When faced with a specific message to convey, managers must decide which internal communications tool(s) will be most effective.

First, consider the following:

#### The nature of the message:

How important is it? How complex is it? What impact will this information have on operations? What impact will this information have on employees? Will it have any impact on employees' families? When will these impacts be felt?

Generally, the more complex or the more important the message, the more likely that face-to-face communication is warranted. This should almost always be supplemented by a printed or

electronic version for clarity and consistency of message. E-mail or voice broadcast can be used as a reminder or update.

#### The messenger:

Who is the most appropriate source of this information: the employee's supervisor, manager, Director, Deputy City Manager, City Manager, Mayor?

Employees generally prefer to hear from their direct supervisor, but "big picture" news may be more appropriate coming from senior management.

#### The timing of the message:

When should the message be delivered? The cardinal rule on timing is that employees should always know about something that affects them before anybody else knows. Employees feel more valued if they become aware of information before it is public knowledge.

### **Communication Matrix**

The following pages contain a Communications Matrix to help assess departmental communications needs and find the right way to communicate with staff. The Matrix is an overview in table form of the communications tools available, with a brief description of why each tool should be used and when and how often to use it.

## Internal Communications Matrix & Guide

“How can I best communicate with employees?”

Formal Face to Face Communication		
Description	Why?	When & How Often
All-Staff “Big Picture” Meetings	To help employees understand their department’s goals and how their work fits into the big picture.	On an annual basis to communicate business plan information  To communicate information with department-wide implications such as a reorganization or other big picture/policy changes.
Department-wide meeting During peak seasons, it may be more appropriate to break this down into divisional meetings	For regular and routine communications; may be necessary to convey an unexpected but important message that has a broad impact.	On an annual or seasonal basis for routine communications  On an as-needed basis for important sudden and/or far-reaching news
Workgroup or staff meeting	For information sharing, updating, assigning tasks.	Weekly or bi-weekly
Management Forum	Half- or full-day gathering of managers in the department or agency to discuss management issues. It provides the opportunity to refocus as a management on departmental goals and strategies	Once or twice yearly; perhaps as much as quarterly in larger department.
Senior management meetings	For information sharing and decision making	Weekly or bi-weekly.

Technology is making us more efficient than ever at sharing information, yet over-reliance on technology can actually result in lower quality communications.

Communication is about relationships, as well as information. And sometimes, an e-mail isn't enough.

<b>Informal Face to Face Communication</b>		
<b>Description</b>	<b>Why?</b>	<b>When &amp; How Often</b>
Director/manager walk-about	To stay in touch with front-line employees and front-line operations.	On a regular basis. Every few weeks or even more frequently as needed

<b>Voice Communication</b>		
<b>Description</b>	<b>Why?</b>	<b>When &amp; How Often</b>
Telephone: call in	For employees to have easy access to vital information from any location – for example, the rain out hotline	To update employees on workplace closures (storms, hazards, etc.
Telephone: call out	For employees to be alerted to department or city wide news. A primary method for routine messages, updates; a secondary method as a follow-up or reinforcement of an important message delivered earlier face to face – for example Connect CTY	To update employees on workplace closures (storms, hazards, etc.); HR requirements, project roll-outs; etc.

<b>Paper and Display Communication</b>		
<b>Description</b>	<b>Why?</b>	<b>When &amp; How Often</b>
Mission Statement Display	To serve as a reminder of the department's mission and to provide focus. The departmental mission statement should be displayed prominently and conspicuously.	Should be a permanent fixture in common areas across the department.
Vision and Core Value Statement displays	To remind employees here the department and their work division is headed and by what values this will be accomplished. The departmental vision and core values statements should be displayed prominently and conspicuously.	Should be a permanent fixture in common areas across the department.
Handwritten or typed notes	To convey a personal message of appreciation to an individual employee or a work-group. This should be key to any employee recognition program.	When the situation warrants – and the situation is often warranted.
Newsletter	As a team builder and morale booster and as news source. Profiling employees and offices or sections and including features on initiatives in all areas of the department of agency helps build team spirit and provides informal recognition. Paper as a medium allows the employee to take it home more easily to share with the family.	Could be monthly, quarterly or even yearly.
Bulletin Board	Primarily as a source for routine news and upcoming events and a secondary source for more important information initially conveyed face to face.	Should be used on an ongoing basis.
Suggestion Box	To allow employees to make suggestions for operational improvement; to give employees a voice in deciding how to make things work better.	Should be used on an ongoing basis.



<b>Electronic Communication</b>		
<b>Description</b>	<b>Why?</b>	<b>When &amp; How Often</b>
Email	Primarily to convey routine messages and updates. It can also be used as a secondary method for follow-up or reinforcement of an important message delivered earlier face to face. Users should take care not to abuse or overuse email; avoid using it for sensitive or complex matters. When in doubt pick up the phone or go visit.	Whenever needed.
Text	Primarily to convey routine messages and updates. Users should take care not to abuse or overuse texting; avoid using it for sensitive or complex matters.	Whenever needed.
E-newsletter	To keep staff informed, to create a culture of information sharing on a city-wide basis.	Employees should subscribe to the city e-newsletter.
Social Media	To keep staff informed, to create a culture of information sharing on a city-wide basis.	Employees should be encouraged to follow the City news-feed on social media.

### **Conclusion**

There are many ways to communicate with staff. One approach, or set of approaches, will be more suitable in some workgroups or some situations than others. But there is no substitute for a personal, face to face exchange.

**And finally, if it's really important, say it more than once.**