

## 4 Communication Mistakes Church Leaders Make



By Patricia of Smart Church Management

The most important function of communication within an organization is to inform, persuade and motivate.

Successful organizations communicate intentionally because they recognize that when leadership fails to communicate effectively, issues arise, conflict presents itself and organizational momentum slows.

We all have different preferences for how we receive information, yet we all crave communication. It is what engages us in our relationships, our employment, and our church.

When employees (as well as volunteers) understand what, and why, things are happening within the church they feel valued and engaged.

However when decisions are made and things go on behind the scenes, that are not communicated, employees feel dismissed and undervalued.

## 4 Communication Mistakes Churches Make

### 1. No Communication

In the hustle and bustle of the day, it can be easy to forget that information we are gathering in everything we do should be shared with other people.

Oftentimes seemingly insignificant information can have a major impact on another employee's job.

For example, if church leadership is discussing a new church program, it is their responsibility to think through who will be impacted by this decision and what information needs to be shared before the program is launched.

Employees want to do a good job and can benefit from knowing about initiatives that may impact their job and responsibilities.

### 2. Controlling Who Receives Information

Sometimes church leaders control who has access to certain information because it somehow makes them feel more important for knowing something that other people do not.

This hoarding of information can create problems in the work place. Particularly if employees are not given the pertinent information needed to do their job.

There is a sensitive balance between sharing enough information to help an employee move forward on something and sharing confidential information that may not be necessary or applicable.

### 3. Not Sharing Difficult Information

Sometimes leaders delay sharing information because it is difficult or uncomfortable to talk about.

When a church is experiencing challenging times, and major changes are going on, it is even more important to communicate the specifics with employees. For example, when church donations are down and difficult budget

cuts need to be made, employees should be made aware of what is going on and what the organization is doing to address the situation.

Employees who feel like they are part of the problem solving process feel valued, engaged and can often help identify ways to cut costs or improve operational efficiencies.

#### **4. Poor Communication Process**

It is important to establish a predictable process for sharing information. Employees should know what information is shared, when to expect information to be shared and who the communicator of information will be.

For example, employees might expect to hear from the senior pastor or business administrator about major church changes, yet their immediate supervisor may share compensation information.

So what are some things to think about when sharing information with employees?

#### **Recognize Why It's Important**

Keeping the information flowing to employees is important because it helps them feel valued, engaged and part of the team.

Organizations that do a good job of proactively sharing information, help minimize the rumor mill and ensure employees are receiving accurate and timely information.

#### **Determine Who Needs to Know**

When we are busy, we don't always think about who needs to know certain information.

Think through the impact information might have on employees who perform certain tasks or have responsibility for certain departments.

For example, if an organization makes a decision to change phone systems, the people who use the system the most would have a need to know and be involved in the planning and selection of the new system.

The receptionist, as an example, would be someone who would be greatly affected by a change like that and if not informed and involved in the process could be made to feel insignificant or unimportant.

### How Do They Need to Receive Information

Communication is administered through a process. Every organization should have a formal communication process that all employees are familiar with. Often this process flows through the management ranks as in an organizational chart.

For example, the leadership team may meet and ask department managers to disseminate meeting information to their direct reports.

### What Format Will the Information Be Delivered

How information is communicated is just as important as what is communicated. The process should have a predictable avenue for information sharing.

For example, is all information communicated via email, text, video, memo, staff meetings or one-on-one interactions? Regardless, employees should know what format they can expect to receive information.

### What is the Process for Asking Questions

Most information sharing sparks thoughts and questions for employees. Information that affects how an employee performs their job may cause the employee to question how work gets done. Always provide an opportunity for employees to ask questions for clarity.

### Who Will Deliver the Message

Think about who will script and who will deliver the message. The Senior Pastor may be the appropriate person to communicate if it is about the global state of the church, but for information that impacts the operations of the organization, the business administrator, department manager or supervisor may be the more appropriate person to share information.

Organizations that do a good job of communicating identify someone who is responsible for thinking through what the communication needs are, who needs to receive the communication and scripting the communication. Good

communication is a never ending challenge but employees appreciate when organizations error on the side of more is better!