Chapter 13
Effective Tools for Improving Employee Feedback during Organizational Change

Tanja Sedej
Graduate School of Government and European Studies, Slovenia

Gorazd Justinek
Graduate School of Government and European Studies, Slovenia

ABSTRACT

Feedback is the fastest and most effective way for organizations to make improvements or get things back on track. Prompt and constructive feedback is strongly linked to employee satisfaction and productivity, and can increase both. During times of change when employees want to be heard and feel involved, it is even more important that the optimal internal communication tools for managing employee feedback are selected. This article tackles these questions and provides fresh empirical data on the selection of internal communication tools in general, with focus then devoted to managing feedback during change from the perspective of a professional communicator. The data evaluated and analyzed was gathered on the basis of research carried out in 2014 among 105 professional communicators of large and medium-sized companies, and was then compared with the results of similar research conducted in 2012.

INTRODUCTION

The general consensus is that organizational changes are becoming increasingly frequent, and so must be planned and managed with great care (Barrett, 2002; D'Aprix, 2008; Kitchen, 2002; Kotter, 1996; Luecke, 2003; Sedej & Mumel, 2013). Sedej and Mumel (2013, p. 25) argue that implementing change often takes longer than planned, whereas Balogun and Hope Hailey (2004) report that approximately 70 percent of changes implemented within organizations fail to achieve their set objectives.

Therefore, a critical factor to be taken into account during an organizational change is internal communications. It is widely accepted that internal communications play a key role in the successful implementation of change (Goodman & Truss, 2004; Kalla, 2005; Kotter, 1996; Proctor & Doukakis,

2003; Young & Post, 1993). Communicating effectively within organization is not something that is nice to have. Indeed, internal communication is essential for the smooth running of every organization. Justinek and Sedej (2011) argue that internal communications represent a key performance and productivity issue, especially for international companies. It is therefore vital to ensure that employees have an optimal range of internal communication tools in general and for giving and receiving feedback. Rapidly changing circumstances require internal communication tools to be continuously improved and revised.

Particularly, when change has a significant impact on employees, organizations need to provide a broad range of options for employees to communicate, ask questions, vent anxieties and express opinions. Working without feedback during a change process is akin to setting off on an important journey without a map. Relying only on sense of direction is not sufficient and of itself to make improvements or keep things on the right track.

The number of ways to communicate in organizations has rapidly increased over the last two decades (Lengel & Daft, 1998; Lydon, 2005; Richardson & Denton, 1996; Wojtecki & Peters, 2000). It is therefore crucial that this area is comprehensively understood in order to achieve best results for setting a feedback system using internal communication tools.

There is a lack of understanding about the link between the effectiveness of internal communications, internal communication tools and feedback during change. Each internal communication tool has features that make it suitable and appropriate in certain situations, but entirely inadequate in others. This chapter therefore explores which internal communication tools are the most appropriate during change generally, as well as in terms of achieving overall business success and facilitating feedback.

The purpose of this chapter is therefore to present not only a critical review of the theories and approaches currently presented regarding internal communications and the facilitation of feedback through internal communication tools, but also the results of an empirical study that will encourage further research into the nature of organizational change, change communications, and internal communication tools and setting feedback system in order to create a more pragmatic framework in which to operate.

This chapter begins with a conceptual analysis of the meaning of organizational change and change management, internal communications and the internal communication tools which are used in this regard. It then concludes with an investigation of the understanding of feedback and its power to enhance the change process.

The results of research conducted on the selection of tools for improving employee feedback in internal communication during change are also presented. The topic was first researched in 2012, but was repeated in 2014. The analysis however reveals that there has been a gradual shift in the use of internal communication tools generally and, more specifically, for exchanging feedback.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Change Management and Internal Communications

Technological development, fierce competition and globalization are just some of the critical elements that force organizations to transform or adjust to new business conditions. Organizational changes are a fact of everyday life and vital for survival. They must therefore be successfully planned and managed (Balogun & Hope Hailey, 2004; Beshtawi & Jaaron, 2014; Ćirić & Raković, 2010; D'Aprix, 2008; Koonce, 1991; Kitchen & Daly, 2002; Kotter, 1996; Luecke, 2003). Kitchen and Daly (2002, p. 46) argue that

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