

HUMAN RESOURCES

Effective leaders champion communication skills

Communication is one of the most fundamental processes of management, and effective communication is essential for organizations to run smoothly. Not only is communication essential for information sharing and decision making, it is also vital for leveraging productive relationships with customers, co-workers, vendors and the media.

In the fast-paced foodservice industry, nearly every aspect of executive management involves communication — whether it is managing the daily workflow, recognizing progress and achievement, offering solutions to obstacles, or reinforcing the company's vision, mission and values. In his classic study of executives, researcher Henry Mintzberg found that executives spend most of their days communicating with other people.

Numerous studies show that communication is closely tied to an organization's total effectiveness, which underscores why organizations need "communication champions" in order to be successful. Research conducted by The Elliot Leadership Institute identified communication as one of the 10 Dimensions of Executive Leadership critical to effective executive leadership in the industry.

The communication champion is acutely aware of nonverbal communication, messages



Stephen J. Caldeira



Louise van der Does

that are transmitted through facial expressions, movements, body position and physical contact. Studies show that 60 percent of a verbal message is communicated through facial expressions and body movement. Consider the messages communicated by a simple nod, a frown, a ragged T-shirt worn to work, a disapproving tone of voice or a closed office door.

Within organizations there are many channels of communication that allow for an ongoing exchange of information: downward, upward, horizontal and informal.

Downward communications from supervisors to customers or employees tends to flow in one direction, discouraging response, whereas information sent upward from subordinates to superiors encourages feedback. Sharing information horizontally across department lines or among peers can help eliminate duplication and improve teamwork.

Meanwhile, the most informal communication channel, the social interaction among associates known as "the grapevine," can also be the most influential in business.

At the center of all this information flow is the communication champion, who understands that all channels of communication are intrinsic to organizational performance. As

Loren B. Belker, author of "The First-Time Manager," suggests, executives should "communicate downward to subordinates with at least the same care and attention as [they] communicate upward to superiors."

In the same vein, the communication champion recognizes that effective communication is not one-way. Sending a mass e-mail or letter to employees is a superficial way of disseminating information. It does little to build a foundation of trust. Real, two-way communication involves face-to-face interaction.

Communication champions invite open and honest dialogue, creating an environment of inclusion where communication is encouraged, valued and rewarded. They encourage employees to express their ideas, suggestions and disagreements. This develops a foundation of trust, which in turn creates a culture of innovation and enterprise.

Doug Brooks, president and chief executive of Dallas-based Brinker International, embraces just such an environment. Instead of waiting for directives to flow downward, employees at Brinker are encouraged to think proactively. Brinker facilitates two-way communication by establishing vehicles and processes for exchanging information to ensure that employee viewpoints are heard. These vehicles include surveys; small leadership

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Q&A

Aboody: Great leadership, positive work culture foster loyalty among employees

Employees don't leave jobs, they leave bosses. Restaurant operators have repeatedly heard this theory since the landmark 1998 Employer of Choice report, which was underwritten by Coca-Cola for the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, that examined turnover in the foodservice industry. The link between leadership and loyalty is still critical today, advised Denise Franck Aboody, a former restaurant trainer who now does consulting, coaching and leadership training for restaurant companies through her Minneapolis firm, d franck & associates.

How does leadership impact loyalty?

Leadership defines the culture. Culture changes perception and perception drives loyalty.

How does leadership define culture?

Leadership sets the stones in place, the expectations for performance. That builds the foundation of the culture and defines how people view themselves as part of the organization. People have perceptions about the organization based on the culture. If they feel appreciated, if what they are doing is making a difference and they have an opportunity for advancement — there are increased levels of loyalty.

What are the leadership qualities needed to build a positive culture or work environment?

Vision, character and adaptability. As an individual leader, your vision and how well you communicate it to various levels of the organization is important.

What about character?

Does the individual walk the talk? Are they the embodiment of the organization's values?

Adaptability means being able to communicate with a dishwasher and with an executive vice president. One of the core needs of a leader is to identify in 30 seconds who you are dealing with and how to adapt yourself to that individual.



Denise Franck Aboody

But aren't good leaders people who have natural leadership ability?

I'm a firm believer that everyone has a leader within him. With the right coaching and diagnostic tools, you can identify areas that are holding people back or blocking them. Most of the things we do are learned habits and behaviors. Natural talent does exist, but superstars can be developed.

— **Dina Berta**

NEWS DIGESTS

Pioneering chef-educator Patricia Bartholomew dies at 61

BROOKLYN, N.Y. — Patricia "Pat" Bartholomew, a chef-educator who was chairwoman of the hospitality management program at New York City College of Technology, or City Tech, here for 18 years, died March 10 after a long illness. She was 61 years old and lived in Manhattan and White Lake, N.Y.

Before she started her teaching career, Bartholomew was a pioneering chef at such establishments as the Waldorf=Astoria, Ruskay's and The Front Porch.

She is survived by her husband, Geoffrey; son, Rafael of New York; daughter, Rebecca Soller of Port Washington, N.Y.; parents, George and Patricia Procak of Phoenix and White Lake, N.Y.; and four sisters and their families.



Patricia Bartholomew

New ServSafe food safety training materials available in April

CHICAGO — The National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, based here, is launching a new edition of ServSafe, a food safety training and certification program for the foodservice industry, early next month.

The fourth edition of the ServSafe product line includes updates on federal government guidelines and information on the best food safety practices. Additional enhancements include real-world scenarios, a microbiology chapter, new jurisdictional requirements and a new employee training section.

The edition is based on the 2005 Food Code by the Food and Drug Administration. It will be available beginning April 3.

HR Happenings

High school students Angelica DeRobles and Jack Hogan recently beat out 19 other competitors to win four-year scholarships worth more than \$80,000 in the Johnson & Wales University National High School Culinary Challenge at the school's Charlotte, N.C., campus. DeRobles, a student at Central County Occupational Center in San Jose, Calif., baked a chocolate lava cake. Hogan, who attends Portsmouth High School in Portsmouth, N.H., made duck breast with butternut squash risotto and maple-roasted squash purée. J&W is based in Providence, R.I.

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