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As we look forward to 2021 and transitioning to a “new normal,” some changes are clearly here to stay. For example, many organizations have proven out the business case for remote or hybrid working models and plan to continue with them long after COVID-19 is in our collective rearview mirror. This transition has, and will continue to, impact the way we work, learn, and socialize. To maintain and build employee morale, engagement, and productivity through this type of shift, organizations must optimize their internal communications. In today’s workplace, the following Cs should be considered to drive effective communication: Control, Consistency, Culture.

Control

As employees continue to adjust routines and adapt to remote work, or any substantive change, companies should communicate a sense of control within their organization and provide visibility to strategic plans. These strategic plans may include new operating models, plans for growth or recovery, strategies for furloughed employees to return to work, or the pivoting of service offerings.

Tips for Conveying Control:

- Create a visual representation (e.g., logo, tagline, bullet points) of the company’s vision or goals to brand and market the change. Employees will associate communications with this visual.
 - Focus on communicating WHY a change is happening including the context driving the change and how those changes support the company’s overarching vision and goals.
 - Implement a regularly scheduled virtual All-Hands Meeting to discuss strategic initiatives and keep the organization informed of milestones.
- Create a platform where employees can raise questions or concerns anonymously. Address these inquiries in the All-Hands meeting or through small group discussions to ensure employees’ voices are heard and appreciated.

Consistency

When employees are geographically dispersed, they may be receiving information from various sources and the messages may not align. Providing consistent communications is key to minimizing apprehension and fostering trust across the organization.

Tips for Developing Consistency:

- For any changes being implemented, identify a project sponsor or gatekeeper to review communications and ensure there is a uniform message provided to employees.
- Revisit the strategic initiatives discussed in the All-Hands Meeting to align communications with the strategic vision of the organization, and celebrate accomplished milestones emphasizing community and unification.
- Convey a theme of compassion in all communications, recognizing the challenges of 2020 and the commitment of the organization to support its employees through 2021 and beyond.

Culture

In a remote setting, it can be challenging to reinforce company culture and engagement. Culture often motivates employees to perform at their best and energizes them to work collaboratively for the greater good. To build this culture, leaders should be championing engagement throughout the organization and investing in their teams.

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Tips for Creating Culture:

- Implement a recurring touchpoint with direct reports to obtain updates on their status, discuss their concerns, provide feedback on performance, and receive feedback on what is working well and what can be improved. These touchpoints should cascade throughout the organization creating a network of support and collaboration.
- Develop a monthly employee spotlight highlighting the good works of employees who have gone above their duties and demonstrated exceptional performance.
- Create a space to discuss personal and professional interests and achievements. Consider creating virtual work pods amongst employees that have similar interests so they can meet regularly to connect with colleagues that share similar passions.
- Create company branding materials such as posters, t-shirts, or coffee mugs and send to remote employees to build brand identity and team unification.

Control. Consistency. Culture. Simple words on their own, but together can build a communication framework to effectively navigate uncharted territory. The most important thing to remember, especially in these times of transition, is communication is critical to recognizing and supporting a company's number one asset, its employees. Is your organization leveraging the 3C framework to optimize communications?

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