



SOLVING YOUR COMMUNICATION *BREAKDOWN*

A recent article in the [Sydney Morning Herald](#) highlighted the plight of the critically endangered regent honeyeater.

It seems that the male birds are either forgetting their birdsong, singing an abbreviated version, or beginning to mimic the songs of other birds. Since the females don't recognise these songs they're not matching with males.

This miscommunication means that these birds are literally singing themselves out of existence!

Although we don't generally use communication in the workplace for breeding purposes, a lack of communication can lead to frustration.

Singing from the same book

Think about your quality manual as the guidebook for your organisation.

It should explain the goals of the business and the systems put in place to ensure quality outcomes. Your manual should reflect your quality assurance program. Employees should be able to find and understand their role in ensuring the goals of the organisation within the pages of this document.

Does this sound like your quality manual? Is it simple to find and navigate? Or is it placed in a glass cabinet somewhere and dusted off for special occasions?

A quality manual should be a dynamic document, regularly reviewed and updated for the changing needs of the business and its staff.

Changing the tune

Since this is a document that can be updated and altered, employees should be encouraged not only to read it, but to give feedback on the contents. This means that if someone's role has changed or their responsibilities altered, this should be reflected in the manual.

Similarly, if a policy or procedure changes, make sure everyone knows, not just the people you think may be affected. An intranet announcement plus an email could be sufficient.

If the change is major, consider having employees sign off on them to ensure they're read and understood. Depending on the scope of the change, training on how the policy or procedure will affect employees may also be required.

High fidelity

The primary purposes of a quality assurance program are to produce consistent products or services, improve customer satisfaction, reduce internal costs and reduce waste.

However, the value of employee efficiency and loyalty shouldn't be overlooked. Employees need to understand the direct link between their work and the outcomes for customers. A business with well-trained, loyal employees that have pride in their work and the business they work for, is gold.

Publicising your well-implemented quality program is satisfying for employees but also demonstrates your quality commitment to customers.

Sharing the song

Scientists are working on solutions for the honeyeater. These include putting wild-caught adult birds with young, zoo-born males to help them learn the correct calls and investigating fitting speakers in trees to teach juveniles.

Workplaces could adopt similar practices by developing well thought out onboarding for new staff and mentoring programs within the organisation.

Here are some other strategies for excellent communication within an organisation:

A knowledge bank

This is almost like Google for your business! It's best to develop this on an intranet system to ensure information is captured and retained.

A knowledge bank is unique to your organisation and can contain anything that employees may find useful. This could be FAQs, anecdotes from longer serving staff members, and Q&A sections. In fact, anything that employees would share whether in formal meetings or coffee breaks, could be included. The most important feature is to make it easy to access, add information and search.

Internal newsletter

When you're busy, it's easy to lose track of what's happening within your company. An internal newsletter can be an informal round-up of news and communications. It can include highlights from each department plus an overview from senior management.

Experiment with the frequency of these – weekly, monthly – and always include them on the intranet.

Noticeboards

With more people returning to the workplace, the humble noticeboard in the break room has a valuable place in communication. Whether directing employees to new information on the intranet or encouraging them to add their own news to the knowledge bank, people will often stand and read bright, brief messages while dunking their tea bag...

A stay interview

While exit interviews may be a familiar concept, a stay interview probably isn't. This process could be carried out by HR or a manager.

The purpose is to discuss with employees what they like and dislike about their jobs with the goal of retaining good staff. This should be made clear to the employee up front. Plus, let them know that if there's a problem, the person conducting the interview wants to be part of the solution.

How can we help?

MAS provides a comprehensive set of resources to support your business.

We'll work with you to ensure your quality manual reflects your business.

We'll help you prepare for external audits or assessments.

And we can provide training to your staff on best business practices and improvements.

Email info@masmanagementsystems.com.au or phone Maree on 0411 540 709 for a confidential discussion.

Let us help you work better and smarter!