



Developing line management communication

Understand where line management begins

Line management does not begin in some obscure part of lower middle management. Top of the line are the board directors themselves. Ensure line management communication starts with your most senior managers.

Provide a clear communication role

Line managers are the link between the vision at the top and the delivery at the front-line. So it's important to tell line managers exactly what you need them to do and involve them in deciding how to do it. If you don't do this, you become part of the myriad problems faced by line managers.

Work with HR for best results

Human Resources will certainly get to know about it if it doesn't work, so why not involve them in the line management communications to begin with? HR colleagues can help define the communication competencies for all management levels. They can also monitor how managers are doing as part of the performance management process.

Listen to managers' concerns

It's difficult to be a manager today, when people question and challenge more. Often, managers have no more information than the people they manage. So, ensure that top management provides a forum to listen to and acknowledge what line managers have to say.

Put information in context

Every organisation expects line managers to translate information from the top of the company into workable knowledge at the front line. Unless you give managers examples of how to prioritise and put information in context, this translation process will be haphazard at best. If you want middle managers to give your messages relevance, provide managers with the detail and answers they need to be credible with their teams and don't overload them.

Celebrate whatever works

Sometimes the best-laid plans work less well than a customised, original approach from a line manager. Recognise and share such examples of effective practice. Consider making it best practice and make sure you celebrate examples of where it works.

Identify people who need support

Many managers are promoted for technical excellence and find themselves in charge of teams they feel ill-equipped to manage. Used to success of a different nature, such people can be reluctant to ask for the support they need in managing teams of people. Position any training positively, make it accessible and tailor it for differing needs and levels of experience.

Encourage respect for line managers

Due to the pressures on line managers, many communicators consider line management communication their biggest problem. Encourage your employees to understand that, when it comes to line managers, there's a place for both challenge and respect. If you have the right to challenge, then you have the responsibility to give respect.