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Evaluate and Analyze Your Communication with a Comprehensive Assessment

Conduct a Communication Assessment to determine the quality of your communication before spending the time and money required for a more comprehensive Communication Audit

SINCE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL COMPANIES COMMUNICATE well, understanding how your communication is working and how it might work better is critical to achieving this success. Flawed communication leads to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, mistakes, low morale, higher turnover, decreased sales, and lower market valuation; whereas effective communication leads to lower turnover, greater contributions, increased total shareholder value, and stronger market valuation of your company.

Communication is a complex process with many potential pitfalls that can be identified and corrected.

There are two methods to determine the quality of your communication; a:

- ◆ Communication Assessment (a short, pointed process)
- ◆ Communication Audit (a comprehensive, far-reaching process that encompasses the activities of a communication assessment)

Both strategically evaluate and analyze your company's communication; both form the basis for a Communication Plan. A communication assessment is a fixed-cost alternative that quickly gives you a bead on your communication efforts, which helps you determine if you need to spend the time and money necessary to conduct a more comprehensive communication audit.

A Communication Assessment. This closed-end, short-term (fixed price) process focuses on the *quality* of your communication: how employees at all levels feel about your internal

communication, its content, and the distribution vehicles.

A series of interviews, focus groups (including, perhaps, implementing a version of the world café), surveys, and questionnaires conducted with employees from across the company (various departments, management and staff, recognized leaders and informal leaders) elicits a cross section of thoughts, information, and ideas. Key questions elicit responses about what these people know about the company, what they do, what they see is important about their job, and how it affects the company's mission and goals. It discovers what people know, what they don't know, and what they are unclear or misinformed about.

The expertise of the people conducting the assessment enables a deeper grasp and evaluation of responses, ultimately painting a more robust and accurate picture. These interviewers must develop the appropriate questions to elicit worthwhile answers, and be available to conduct the assessment in a short timeframe.

To be of the greatest value, these responses must be honest. This is difficult to obtain if employees feel their responses might be used for other purposes or might not remain confidential. Objectivity and trust are paramount to obtaining honest answers since anonymity is critical.

From this information, a picture of where communication is clear and where it is cloudy and confusing emerges. The results of a communication assessment determine the need for a communication audit.