

BREAKING BARRIERS IMPROVES PRODUCTION, SERVICE QUALITY

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Eliminating communication barriers between management can improve production and increase product and service quality.

In the old days employees communicated with employers simply by turning to the next workbench, anvil or wheel. In today's environment, with its multilevel multinational organizations, employees must have timely and accurate information to complete their tasks. All too often information is lost in a bewildering maze of physical and abstract barriers created within the workplace environment.

Managers create barriers to segregate themselves from their employees to impose an artificial status they perceive as an integral part of their ranking within the organization. Ivory towers are more than a state of mind in most organizations. Managers who proclaim their doors are always open are being hypocritical if their employees must undergo an interrogation simply to schedule an appointment.

This situation creates more than just physical separation between managers and employees. Under these conditions, employees perceive their ideas aren't welcome by their managers even when those ideas warrant consideration.

Managers also create communication barriers to keep would-be interlopers from finding out what is and isn't going on within the organization. To further personal or departmental agendas, managers often hoard resources—capital, personnel and information. Information is a source of power. Ever-\- lock on an organizational chart represents a clearing house for information.

Information can be passed from the upper levels of the organization downward in the form of directives and policies and passed upward through the organization representing the actual operations and production. In their attempts to monopolize this resource, managers are trying to deliberately obscure their activities.

Managers who erect needless barriers and allow members of their organization to do so are serving their own interests, not those of the organization. Barriers are impediments to success. They increase the cost of providing a product or service while adding nothing, or in some cases, negative value.

Employees are forced to navigate through myriad obstacles to perform basic functions. Communication barriers, over which employees have no control, quickly decrease the ability to produce and erode employees' pride of workmanship and product or service quality.

One of management's basic responsibilities~, is the creation of an environment in which all employees can contribute to the limits of their abilities. Isolating an employee at a workstation is detrimental to any awareness of total contribution. People aren't mushrooms they can't incorporate new responsibilities if they're kept in the dark. Even tasks considered menial can take on additional importance when employees are fully aware of their contributions to the wellbeing of the organization.

Removing barriers will increase each employee's perception of e organization as a total entity, not just an isolated department or work group. Work satisfaction will improve as a by product because employees will make better use of their resources.

Artificial barriers can be eliminated by incorporating information technology. Many types of technology make information readily available to members of the organization at all levels. This influx of information creates a workplace where employees can more efficiently perform their duties.

One problem that can be alleviated by electronic communications is the filtering process in which these barriers thrive. The various levels that normally act as filters are bypassed, and information is transmitted directly to those levels where it's needed.

Most employees can exercise far more creative, responsible self direction and self control than their particular jobs demand. Information regarding the performance of the organization is important to employees, but more critical to them is information about their individual performance.

Sharing information with employees and involving them in routine decisions satisfies a basic need of belonging to a group. All employees should be especially aware of where their group fits and the contribution the group makes to the organization.

It becomes even more important to implement electronic communications when company facilities are separated by long distances. The success of an individual, a manager and an organization is dependent on available resources. Organizations invest large amounts of money and energy to reduce information barriers between themselves and their business environment.

Communication barriers within a typical organization particularly those that isolate departments and individuals can prove detrimental. Disseminating data through information technology can be one effective way to bring down the walls.

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