South Central College Project Plan for

"Enhancing Internal Communications"

Introduction

Digital news and social media platforms have transformed the way we consume information: We want it now, and we want it through whatever device is in our hands. This fundamental shift has revealed itself in the work place as well; employees want information to be at their fingertips — immediate, customizable, and easily consumable. Many colleges are responding by re-evaluating traditional internal communications strategies and creating channels that combine collaboration and information sharing in immediate, more accessible and more shareable formats.

The consequences for not optimizing internal communications can be dire. A recent study conducted by Melcrum, an international leader in effective internal communications strategies, found that in organizations that do not prioritize internal communications, nearly one in five employees is disengaged. Productivity and performance suffer.

Executive Summary of Project Charter

South Central College recently received feedback from employees in two separate and significant forms: The Pace Survey Results and the Achieving the Dream Site Coach's Visit Recommendations. Both of these sources revealed a lack of open and effective communication among the college's administration, faculty and staff. Specifically, the feedback indicated that communications from administration fails to effectively engage faculty and staff in decision-making and keep all employees informed. The current need is to create more appropriate communications processes and protocols, and to make sure that all employees and students know how and when to utilize them. This project will result in a framework for improved internal communications at the administration and department/program levels.

PACE survey feedback:
- The extent to which information is shared within the institution, 2.547 (#10)
- The extent to which decisions are made at the appropriate level at this institution, 2.639 (#4)
- The extent to which I am able to appropriately influence the direction of this institution, 2.691 (#15)
- The extent to which open and ethical communication is practiced at this institution, 2.706 (#16)
- The extent to which a spirit of cooperation exists at this institution, 2.716 (#25)

Achieving the Dream Site Visit Feedback:
- Perceptions from members of the college community that communication is lacking
- Pervasive climate of "top down" management and decision making with no room for input from those who stand to be affected by administrative decisions
- Employees want to have a greater sense of belonging to SCC
- Coaches urged all members of your administration take care to model the kind of open communication, timely responsiveness and receptively to faculty and staff involvement in problem solving to encourage and build an atmosphere of collegiality and trust

Challenges/Assessment

- Need more effective two-way (upward, downward, horizontal) internal communications channels
- Existing channels may neglect some stakeholders needs and input
- No specific individuals are charged with comprehensive internal messaging
- Employees are challenged with information overload
- Need communications to be a shared responsibility involving all employees

Project Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to:
- Define internal communications goals and recommend steps for achieving them.
- Determine specific types of information desired by employees.
- Identify primary internal communication channels available to internal constituents and their preferred methods of receiving communications.
- Establish processes to receive timely and relevant information from the right employees at the right time.
- Establish processes and assign responsibility for sending timely, targeted, and relevant information to the right employees at the right time.

Goals

South Central College will develop a comprehensive institutional internal communications process that:
- Furthers overall institutional strategic goals
- Helps to build a culture of open two-way communications (upward, downward, horizontal)
- Strengthens employee engagement
- Enhances employee awareness of South Central College's mission, vision, and values

Objectives

The newly designed internal communications process will:
- Reinforce institutional vision, mission and values
- Determine strategies for eliciting two-way communications (upward, downward, horizontal)
- Enhance employee satisfaction and retention
- Increase participation in SCC activities and events
- Foster morale and pride in SCC's role in the regional community
- Engage employees in where the college is headed and why the work they do is important to SCC's success

Scope

The target (i.e. stakeholders/beneficiaries) for this project are employees of South Central College. The project includes a phased implementation of strategies to make a significant positive impact on internal communications at South Central College.

Success Metrics

- Increased two-way communications (upward, downward, horizontal) via designated feedback channels
- Improved PACE survey results
- Feedback from students via CCSSE
- Improved response time for calls to action
- Employee retention
- ATD feedback from site visits
- Event attendance at campus wide events

Phase I – Communications Channel Inventory

Confirm value of current communications channels and seek feedback on potential new tactics, which may include:

College-wide channels:

Current
- Email (to all employees and specific departments)
- Connections eNewsletter
- Presidential Forums
- Kiosks/TV monitors
- Posters, banners, flyers (mailboxes)
- Campus bulletin boards
- College Calendars
- Text/STAR emergency alert
- Social media
- SCC website
- D2L
- ITV

Potential New
- College-wide Intranet
- SCC news & information site
- Presidential Forum Q & A vehicle (before and after)
- Video messages
- Text messages (non-emergency)
- Voice mail messages
- Desk alert pop-ups (telephone/computer)
- "Ask Us/Tell Us" Email Inbox
- Town hall/Fireside Chats with leadership
- Internal social networking tools (Yammer, app)
- Webcasts
- SCC blog
- "Stay" interviews
- Communications Champions Team (made up of volunteer employees willing to serve as key internal communicator)
- Bathroom stall signage
- Employee mailroom signage
- SCC Listserv
- RSS Feed

Administration/Director-specific channels:

Current
- Management team meetings
- Managers Email Group
- Deans' Council meetings
- Department Chairs meetings
- Email

Department-specific channels:

Current
- Face-to-face team briefing meetings
- One-on-one supervisor/employee check-ins
- Department meetings (faculty)
- Department shared drives
- Skype instant messaging
- ITV
- Email

Potential New
- Department Intranet Area
- Leadership visit to individual units
- Department Listserv
- Notice board

Intra Departmental Channels:

Current
- Face-to-face team briefing meetings
- Skype instant messaging
- ITV
- Email
- Shared drives/information access points

Other internal audience-specific tactics:

Current
- SCC committee meetings
- Shared Governance meetings
- Meet and Confer meetings
- Academic Affairs and Standards Council meetings
- Union meetings

Phase 2 – Information Inventory

Identify the types of information employees want and need, and what types of feedback they want to provide, these may include:

Announcements:
- Campus event information (SCC events open to the general public, events hosted by a third-party at SCC, events open to SCC employee/students only)
- Significant institutional news and announcements
- Information/announcement needed by entire internal audience
- Information/announcement needed by specific group of people (department)
- Planned change in working practice for a large number of people
- Planned change in working practice for a small number of people (department)
- Initiative updates (Achieving the Dream, grants, projects)

Kudos/Inspiration:
- Good news institutional level
- Good news unit level
- Accomplishments of employees and students
- Praise for good work
- Inspiration/goals/values
- Collaborative ventures with other organizations
- Alumni/Business partner good news

Meeting Updates:
- Shared Governance minutes
- Meet and Confer minutes
- Management team minutes
- Leadership Council minutes

Human Resources:
- Information requiring urgent action
- Simple change in policy
- Complex change in policy
- HR information & action items
- Administration changes, MMA and above
- Employee profiles
- Retirements, promotions and new employee hires
- Employee departures
- Contractual changes to collective bargaining agreements
- Death of an employee or retiree
- Organizational and unit changes
- Professional development opportunities
- SCC job postings
- Employee directory with photos
- Employee recognition

Research and Institutional Effectiveness:
- Survey results
- Program assessment outcomes
- Best practice highlights
- Enrollment information

Finance and Administration:
- Physical moves/relocations of individuals and teams
- Notice of service disruption (internet, phone)
- Weather closures
- Telephone directory
- Construction updates
- Budget process
- Budget updates

Economic Development:
- Grant opportunities
- Grants received by the college
- Activities of the college's Centers (CBI and SMCA)
- Community event attendance opportunities
- Community involvement opportunities

Marketing and Communications:
- SCC media releases
- Media coverage
- Updates to college website
- Marketing campaigns and college-wide efforts
- Relevant external news

Academic and Student Affairs:
- New program launch
- Program suspension or elimination
- Registration
- Course schedules
- Academic calendar (changes to calendar)
- Campus enrollment updates
- Program enrollment updates
- Student profiles
- Death of a student
- Important dates and deadlines (textbooks, advising, grades)
- Call for volunteers
- Updates to ISRS software
- College forms

Office of the President:
- Updates to the strategic and business plans
- Management decisions and rationale
- Foundation fundraising priorities
- Legislative advocacy/Bonding updates
- Actions from Board of Trustees
- Minnesota State System Leadership Council updates
- Policy and procedure updates & reviews (system/campus)

Phase 3 – Employee Preference Analysis

SCC has a diverse group of employee stakeholders. Understanding what information they want and the channel through which they want to receive it and what feedback they want to provide and how they want to provide it is vital to effective employee communication.

Recommended Initiative:

Engage external facilitator to conduct a study (focus groups, surveys, etc.) to determine what information employees want, and the channel through which they want to receive it. Create a matrix, such as that below, that can guide communications at South Central College.

Employee Preference Matrix Template SAMPLE

Communications Channel	Information Type							
	Event Information	College-wide Announcements	College Closing	Survey Results	Policy Change	Construction Update	Update on Key Issues	HR Action Items
Presidential Form	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Email to All	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Kiosks/TV Monitors	✓		✓					
Connections	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Bulletin Boards	✓					✓		
Text/STAR Alert			✓					
Website	✓		✓		✓			

Phase 4 – Planning

Based on the Employee Preference Matrix, determine:

- Improve, modify, or optimize current communications channels and determine person(s) responsible for each
- Develop and implement new two-way communications channels (upward, downward, horizontal) and determine person(s) responsible for each
- Prioritize information types and determine responsible person(s) for each information type
- Develop a draft formal Internal Communications Plan, based on all of the above, that includes roles and responsibilities

Phase 5 – Implementation and Evaluation

Implement the Internal Communications Plan:

- Share draft findings and resulting draft formal Internal Communications Plan determined in Phase 4 with all employees
- Incorporate feedback and finalize formal the Internal Communications Plan
- Provide responsible persons with communication templates and implementation training
- Evaluate on a regular basis, incorporate continuous improvements, and report updates to the college community.