Communicating Policies/Procedures around the Globe

Effectively Communicating Around the Globe

Kim Sauter-Bray
WRTG 394
Professor Taylor
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I.   Summary

During the past month I have gathered and reviewed a variety of internal policies and procedures within the organization and the various methods in which they are communicated.

The Company, as most of you know, has more than doubled in size over the last five years from 11,000 to 23,000 employees. Due to the size, diverse workforce, and various locations of this global organization, the communication of corporate policies and procedures has become a difficult task. Although communication is of the highest importance during any transition period, new policies and updated procedures are not reaching the appropriate people and therefore adherence to those policies does not exist.

In addition to the multiple acquisitions and the ongoing integration efforts, the numerous offices around the world, along with the sales and manufacturing facilities, create a difficult environment for proper communications.

II.   Introduction

Over the years, our methods of communicating have evolved for many reasons. We have moved from a standard typewriter, to an electronic typewriter, to a personal computer, and now to handheld devices for communicating. The same must occur for our training and communication of corporate policies in the workforce.

In the following pages we will address whether the location of our policies and procedures is effective, as well as, identify the best method to communicate these policies to increase employee awareness. Communication inhibitors will be identified and recommendations and next steps discussed.

Past policies and procedures have been collected and the method of communication analyzed. Research has also been conducted as to what other global corporations are doing to communicate policies effectively. During our review we discovered that our policies are located around the globe in multiple locations, on multiple servers, and even on some local hard drives. Also, there are multiple policies covering the same subject matter yet displaying different information and causing confusion as to which policy is accurate and current. Further, the method for distributing policies is inadequate in that our policies are not reaching the necessary personnel.

According to *"Policy Communication in a YouTube World"* there are three key factors that have impacted the importance of effective communications and training (Rasmussen 2012). These three factors are listed below and will be discussed later in more detail.

3 Key Factors Impacting Effective Communications for Global Organizations

1. The constant increase of regulations

2. Globalization and,

3. Outsourcing.

Now that we have identified a few of the possible issues, let's take a look at what other global organizations are doing to ensure effective communication and understanding of corporate policies today.

III.   Analysis

As mentioned above, we collected policies from many locations to determine whether the location of our corporate policies and procedures is effective, as well as identify the best method to communicate these policies to increase employee awareness.

The following communication barriers were identified during our collection and review:

Communication Barriers

Audience Expectations

Audience Expectations	When the message or content of the policy communicates something different from what is expected by the audience. The unexpected message could then create confusion and also mixed signals for the audience.

Many of our policies are distributed by upper management and the receiving audience has either never met or know the person sending out the communication. Because of this, employees may simply ignore the communication assuming it was not intended for them.

Cultural Barriers

Cultural Barriers	Relate to age, religion, diverse workforce, education, knowledge and language.

The cultural barriers presents another communication inhibitor in that words, phrases, and body language have different meanings in different areas of the world. We need to become more sensitive to this and even educate our employees. In a recent study conducted and article *"Cross-Cultural Etiquette and Communication in Global Business"* it was suggested that management should provide cross-cultural opportunities to allow employees to build and experience those personal relationships overseas. Allowing this type of cross-cultural training will raise the awareness of different languages, business etiquette, proper attire and manners (Okoro, 2012).

In a related article *"Communication Issues in a Multilingual Business Environment"* it mentioned a study and research that was conducted and stated that in 2004 the estimated costs of occupational injuries and deaths was $142.2 billion. This number comprises 120 million days of lost time, resulting in 4,952 employee deaths and 3.7 million employees disabled. This increase in work related injuries and deaths was directly linked to the fact that not all employees are of a certain education level and have an understanding of the English language. These injuries and deaths relate to the fact that our corporate world has become so diverse we must concentrate on communicating our safety policies and procedures to all effectively (Escobedo, 2013).

Format/Structure

Format/Structure	Using a format that is easy to follow and understand.

Throughout our research we have found that most global companies today are utilizing one format or an identified structure for their policies. In doing this, we will identify one location where all policies are housed, a method of searching this particular location for a specific subject, and also maintain a tickler system for updates.

Noise

Noise	Information presented that adds nothing to the intended message.

Another communication barrier is noise. Noise has been identified in the past as creating problems when communicating a specific message. Noise is simply information contained in a message that adds nothing to the content. This doesn't seem to be a huge problem in regard to corporate policies, but it does tend to create problems in routine business communications.

Organization	Obstacles to proper communication caused by structure.

Words (Connotative Meanings)

Words (Connotative meanings)	Meanings and/or acronyms assigned to words or phrases that may mean one thing to one person, but another to the next person.

In communicating across various cultural and languages, one must be careful to use appropriate words that do not portray a negative connotation in another language. Also, we must make an effort to understand even colors, certain colors can also be offensive in other countries of the world.

Taking into consideration the above communication barriers, is our current method of communicating corporate policies effective? No, it is not. During our collection of the policies we experienced difficulty in locating particular policies on very general topics as vacation and holidays. We also found that we have multiple holiday schedules and it isn't clear which policy should be followed and for whom.

As a result of this finding, our current method of communicating corporate policies must change to create a new awareness and understanding. With such a large global workforce, we must identify a centralized system for posting, training, and updating our policies around the globe. Currently these documents are located on various servers and intranet sites around the world. As we have experienced, it can be difficult to find a particular policy when needed or multiple policies are located with contradicting information.

Our research has indicated that the following three factors play a key role in our need to increase policy awareness:

1. Increase of Regulations
2. Globalization and
3. Outsourcing.

As referenced in *"Policy Communication in a YouTube World,"* the increase of regulations requires us to become more responsible and no longer just post a policy to a corporate intranet. Never knowing or confirming whether our employees have read or are even aware of the policy is negligence. Globalization has required us to also

increase our cultural awareness as individuals. With the various locations around the world, different languages and cultural beliefs, we must assist in educating our employees in cross-cultural etiquette. And lastly, the constant cycling of out-sourcing which places responsibility on third parties to be aware and understand our internal corporate policies (Rasmussen 2012).

We have explained what communication is and we have reviewed the possible issues associated with a global workforce, now let's look at the possibilities for improvement.

IV.   Recommendations and Next Steps

As a growing organization, we have many obstacles to overcome. During this time of integration, we must ensure that our policies are communicated throughout the organization from the most senior level position to recently integrated personnel. To achieve this goal we must identify one central management system for the policies, achieve a general understanding of the corporate code of conduct, and adopt a format that is understood by a culturally diverse organization

Our first step toward better communication in the workplace is a general confirmation and understanding of the corporate Code of Conduct.

The second step is to implement a centralized policy management system that may be housed on our internal server but accessible to all employees regardless of location. An effective policy model was mentioned in *"Policy Communication in a YouTube World"* (Rasmussen 2012) . The model contains the following attributes:

☞ Centralized location of policies
☞ Ticklers for update requirements
☞ Version controls
☞ Accessibility by all personnel
☞ Keyword searches
☞ Web based training
☞ Certification
☞ Short video reminders via email
☞ Policies in local languages

The final step is to implement a cross-cultural education program that will assist employees in understanding the business etiquette, cultural differences, and language barriers while building international relationships.

V.   Conclusion

In conclusion, creating a central policy management system, allows any employee regardless of location to search for a policy as needed. Further, as discussed above, the central system will provide interactive video and training to confirm the understanding of the policy content, which will create additional awareness. When employees understand the policies they feel engaged and are willing to adhere to the policies. No employee intentionally sets out to ignore corporate policies. In most instances it is simply that they cannot locate the policy or do not understand it or how it impacts them or the organization. This central environmental will also provide the means for tracking revisions and alerting the appropriate individuals when a policy is to be reviewed and/or updated.

Initiating a policy management system, will create a central environment where employees can locate current corporate policies, ask questions, and feel engaged. In our global economy, it is simply not enough just having a policy on the books.

VI.   References

Okoro, E. (2012). Cross cultural etiquette and communication in global business. *International Journal of Business & Management*, *7*(16), 130-138.

This article discusses the communication of a global business and the impact or return on investment for the organization. The article further discusses the negotiation skills required in a cross-cultural society and communication skills to be successful.

Escobedo, E. et al. (2013). Communication issues in a multilingual business environment: Insights from managers. *Global Conference on Business & Finance Proceedings*, *8*(2), 64-69. Database: Business Source Complete.

This conference discusses the challenges of communication in a linguistically diverse work force. In addition, the communication or corporate policies and the importance of employee understanding is discussed as a requirement to meet an organization's objectives.

Grandjean, I. et al. (2011). Testing a binding communication strategy in a company: how could persuasive information be more efficient?. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 39(9), 1209-1216. Database: PsycINFO.

This article discusses the relationship between headquarters and subsidiaries of a multinational organization. It also discussed the obstacles and challenges that an organization faces in cross-cultural management.

Rasmussen, M. (2012). Policy communication in a youtube world. Compliance Week, 9(105), 50-50. Retrieved from http://www.complianceweek.com/policy-communication-in-a-youtube-world/printarticle/259686/

This article includes a round table discussion regarding how to approach effective policy communication via interactive content. In the stage of interactive content, the article discusses the use of presentations and videos to convey a message rather than a written document.

Caligiuri, P. (2013). Develop your cultural agility. *T&D, 67*(3), 70-72. Database: MasterFILE Premier

The article, "Develop your cultural agility," discusses the difficulty of communicating in a diverse workforce and global organization. It further discusses the need to learn about the cultural differences and asking for assistance when necessary.

Bell, A. (2010). *Management communications*. (3rd ed., pp. 35-37). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

In this book, Chapter 1 discusses the ten barriers to effective communication such as noise, unorganized thought, wrong interpretations, not understanding the receiver, ignoring the content, avoiding the listener, not confirming with the recipient, along with many others.