

OCC INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AUDIT

JANUARY 1993

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OCC INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AUDIT

Overview

✓ In the fall of 1992, an informal survey was conducted on the campus of Oakland Community College. The results of that informal survey were used to help structure a questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to all full-time employees at Oakland Community College. Eight hundred twenty six questionnaires were sent out, 404 were returned.

what campus
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The survey results have a confidence level of 95 percent college-wide. ^{with an error factor of +/- 5 percent} The data was also reviewed by employee classification and campus location. The confidence level on the employee classification and campus location data was less than 90 percent, so the analysis may not be as statistically valid. A review of internal and external communication materials was also conducted. The purpose of the audit was to determine the answers to several questions including:

- o How effectively does this diverse, multi-campus college conduct its internal communications?
- o How effective are these internal communication efforts in reaching their intended audiences?

- o How effective are the communications from the chancellor's office?

- o How effectively are the administration's communications being reinforced at various sites?

The survey questionnaires were tabulated by Oakland Community College's Office of ^{Institutional} Planning and Analysis. The survey results and the communication materials were analyzed by Hermanoff & Associates.

COLLEGE-WIDE RESULTS

Oakland Community College is in the midst of a great deal of change. The speed and intensity of that change is putting increasing demands on the internal communication system. The survey results point to a strong desire by the participants for more information about activities, decisions and policies that affect the college, their campus and their jobs.

When asked about the amount of information they received concerning the financial condition of their campus or the college, less than 15 percent of the respondents college-wide indicated that they received much or very much financial information about either the campus or the college. But when that same group was asked how much information they would like to receive, more than 80 percent indicated that they would like much or very much information about their campus and the college.

Other areas where respondents expressed a strong desire for more information included information relating to their specific job assignment, information relating to the goals of the college, to personnel changes, to policies and procedures affecting their jobs and to organizational changes.

Respondents college-wide expressed a desire for more information about scheduling and usage of campus facilities and classrooms. Fifty five percent of the people who responded to the survey college-wide said they want much or very much information about scheduling and usage of campus facilities and classroom facilities on their campus, while nearly 26 percent of those responding wanted more information about scheduling and usage of campus facilities and classrooms on other campuses.

More than 75 percent of the survey respondents college-wide said they wanted more information about new programs/course offerings, campus events/activities and campus construction/renovation and maintenance activities on their campus. At least 40 percent college-wide wanted more information about new programs/course offerings, campus events/activities and campus construction/renovation and maintenance activities on other campuses.

Besides getting more information about specific areas, nearly 40 percent of the respondents college-wide felt that there was a need for improved communications from the District Office to campuses. An observation frequently expressed during the informal interview process indicated that when information was requested by the District Office, it was expected to be provided quickly. But information requested from the District Office was not always provided as quickly.

Thirty percent of the respondents felt that management did not release important information in a timely manner and 32 percent of the respondents felt that management did not know how employees felt or thought.

Forty two percent of the respondents said they got much or very much of their information about their work and college from supervisors and management. But 85 percent of the respondents said they would like to get more information from supervisors and management. While nearly 50 percent of the respondents said they received much or very much of their information about their work and the college from staff or department meetings, 80 percent said they would like to receive more information from staff or department meetings.

Participants also expressed a desire to receive more information about their work and the college through electronic mail, newsletters or publications.

Nearly 22 percent of those surveyed said they learned much or very much of the information about their work and the college from rumors. Yet when asked the question, "How much information about your work and the college would you like to get from rumors," only

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7.9 percent said they would like much or very much. One respondent wrote, "There are too many rumors - that are untrue - I would like to be informed about where I work in every area."

As for the communication items used by respondents, the schedule of classes was read or referred to by nearly 70 percent of the people who responded to the question. While 68 percent of the respondents who had access to electronic mail said they read or referred to it often or very often. More than half of the respondents said they read or referred to "OCCurrences," the Board Digest, the special events bulletins, the college catalog and the college academic senate minutes often or very often.

While more than 60 percent of the respondents felt satisfied or better with the length, content and appearance of "OCCurrences," the percentage dropped to 56 percent when asked about frequency. About 60 percent of the respondents felt satisfied or very satisfied with the appearance, frequency and length of the Board Digest, but the percentage dropped to 55 percent when respondents were asked if they were satisfied or very satisfied with the content of the digest.

More than 80 percent of the respondents said they read or referred to memorandums from the Chancellor's Office, from their own departments and from the District Office often or very often. About

61 percent of the participants said they read or referred to memorandums from other campuses often or very often and 71 percent said they read or referred to memos from other departments on their own campus often or very often.

Forty seven percent of the respondents said the administration at their location communicated or reinforced the directions set by the Chancellor's Office well or very well through the use of memorandums. Forty two percent said their administration communicated or reinforced the Chancellor's directions well or very well with staff meetings, with 30 to 36 percent of the respondents reporting that the directions were communicated or reinforced well or better in one-on-one discussions and electronic mail.

ANALYSIS BY EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATION

The various employee groups reflected the college-wide desire for more information about the financial condition of their campus and the college. The employee groups as a whole also wanted more information relating to their specific job assignment, to the goals of the campus and college, to personnel changes, organizational changes and policy and procedures affecting their jobs.

Faculty members out paced all other employee groups in their desire for more information about new programs or course offerings on their campuses. For the maintenance and public safety group, the big issues were scheduling and usage of campus facilities/classrooms at campus locations, both their own and other sites; more information about campus events and activities on other campuses and more information about campus construction and renovations on their campus as well as others. The classified staff appeared to have a strong interest when compared to the college as a whole, in getting more information about new program and course offerings on other campuses and more information about campus events and activities on other campuses.

target
publications
to these
groups
↓
put on
distribution
lists

Occurrences = Newspaper
Sections = New Courses, Programs
= Events/Activities
= Research
= TID-BITS
= BPI = X = Y = Z

Of the total number of participants who felt there needed to be improved communications from the District Office to campuses, the maintenance and public safety group had the highest percentage with more than 46 percent responding. Forty percent of the maintenance and public safety group felt there needed to be improved communications between department and department on the same campus, again the highest percentage of all employee groups on that question. On the question of improved communications from campuses to District Office, it was the administrative and management staff who felt the strongest, nearly 43 percent of the respondents felt there was a need. The faculty, classified staff, maintenance and public safety groups were also more inclined to feel that information reached them too late, that management was not releasing important information in a timely manner and that management did not know what employees were feeling or thinking.

what information important? = ?

The administrative and management staff, maintenance and public safety groups were particularly strong in the desire to get more information about their work and the college from supervisors and management. There was also a strong desire by the administrative and management staff to get more information about work and the college through the use of electronic mail.

ANALYSIS BY SITE LOCATION

To be expected given past 12 months

While the campus locations reflected the desire for more information expressed in general, there was a strong response by participants from the Bee Site for more information about their specific job assignment, the goals of the college, personnel changes, policy and procedures affecting their jobs and organizational changes. Respondents at the Southfield location also appeared to be especially concerned about getting more information about their specific job assignments and organizational changes.

More than 40 percent of the respondents from the five campus sites felt there was a need for improved communications from the District Office to the campus locations. Respondents from the Bee Site were more inclined to feel there was a need for improved communications from campuses to the District Office. Participants from the Orchard Ridge campus were more inclined to feel that management did not release important information in a timely manner and that management did not know what employees were feeling or thinking. One Orchard Ridge participant said in part, "Communication will not improve until there is trust among all divisions or levels of employment. Secrecy/concealment and communication are not compatible words. Teamwork is not an understood concept."

Participants at the Bee Site were particularly strong in their desire to get more information about their work and the college from staff and department meetings and from supervisors and managers. According to a Bee Site respondent, "Communication is a real problem not only college wide but within each department - It's really sad when we hear about things going on that directly affects us from some where else."

The Royal Oak and Southfield campuses seem to have very active rumor mills. More than 60 percent of the respondents from those locations said they receive much or very much information about their work and the college from rumors. But while the percentage was high for respondents who got information from rumors, less than 14 percent of the respondents from the two campuses said they wanted to get information from that particular source.

OCC COMMUNICATION MATERIALS ANALYSIS

Overview

We found the internal and exterior communication materials generated by OCC lacking in consistency. The inconsistencies extended from quality of paper used in brochures, to use of the college logo and campus identification. There also appeared, in some instances, to be a lack of clear focus on exactly who was the target audience and what information was really important to them.

We found the titles of brochures targeted for exterior use to be uninteresting at times which had a tendency to lessen the chances of them being read. There also appeared to be a lack of any overall strategy for somehow linking the college's goals and values in a visual or thematic way to all of its communications.

Brochures

We found a significant lack of consistency in the brochures produced by OCC. We found it extremely difficult to find any consistency in the quality of paper used to develop various brochures. There was no consistency in the placement of the OCC logo and in fact at times no logo was displayed. On some brochures, a decision was made to go with the college seal instead of a logo.

It appeared at times that very little thought was given to the appearance of a brochure, what colors would be best to use, how best should the information be displayed, how readable was the material?

There were some excellent examples of quality brochures, but they tended to be isolated pieces with no uniformity even with each other. In general the writing in the brochures was good.

We found the titles for some of the brochures targeted for exterior use to be uninteresting and lacking in creative energy.

hire/assign a person who coordinates all such
functions = consistency

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=> marketing impact

Someone w/ \rightarrow
writing skills
Marketing
PR.

Newsletters

We found that the writing for OCC newsletters was generally good. The internal newsletter done well most consistently was "OCCurrences." We thought the quality of paper was good, the newsletter seemed focused on its target audience and the layout was generally well done. We did notice that ~~were~~ was not logo display on the document.

On other newsletters, there tended to be inconsistencies on logo use as well as paper quality. The visual appeal of some of the newsletters was lacking and the editorial focus was not always clear. We found some newsletters that tried to pack too much information on one page, which lessen the chance that someone would take the time to read it.

Overall, there appeared to be a complete lack of effort to coordinate the visual layout or logo placement to reflect the fact that the newsletters all came from the same college. There also appeared to be no system set up to determine whether the information contained in one newsletter could be incorporated in another newsletter for better efficiency and possibly higher readership.

Combine all newsletters
into college-wide Newspaper

Chancellor's Office

We found that the information coming out of the Chancellor's office was consistently well written. The messages were generally very focused. However, the appearance of materials out of the Chancellor's office varied significantly as time passed. Early communications although well written, were not presented in a layout that provided the kind of impact consistent with the importance of the information. The current memorandum letterhead for the Chancellor's office is much more appealing than earlier versions.

We found the expression of the college's "vision and values" to be very focused and directed, but were disappointed at what appeared to be a failure to consider the development of a consistent visual presentation in which to frame these vision and value principles. There was no visual consistency between "vision and values" pieces. There was also a failure to visually position the college's image in the expression of the "vision and values" principles through a consistent logo placement.

Other Communication Materials

We thought the schedule of classes for 1992 was presented well and generally easy to read given the amount of information that need to be included. We found that the news release format did not reflect current format standards, nor did its layout provide the best display of the various campus locations. We think that the college's logo is dated. It reflects a look prominent during the 1970s.

In general, we found that communication materials targeted for internal use did a poorer job of providing a unified look than materials targeted for exterior use. There tended to be little if any emphasis on logo placement on internal documents. The quality of paper and visual presentation varied greatly on internal documents, leaving the impression that the internal audience was somehow less important than the exterior one.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Survey Findings

accountability
7/11/11 Plan

- o The college needs to continue and enhance its efforts to keep employees informed about the college's goals and how each employee plays a part in helping the college reach those goals. That effort must become much more of a college-wide mindset.

campus/college
open meetings
direct communication

- o The college needs to develop a plan or enhance an existing plan for reducing the spread of rumors.

Communication Materials Review

News Paper

- o The college should look at consolidating some of its communication pieces and expanding or developing a central piece that provides a college-wide focus.

coordinate

- o The college should look at setting standards for design, material and logo use for all of its internal and external communication pieces.

new design

- o The college should look at evaluating its current logo to see if it continues to represent the focus of the college.

Conclusion

The internal communication system at Oakland Community College is functioning but not effectively. Communications from the Chancellor's office are reaching their intended audiences, but the college as a whole is still struggling with the interpretation of those communications.

The overriding desire by the participants in the survey was for specific information regarding how their jobs were affected by administrative level decisions. They want that information to come not only from the Chancellor's office, but also from their immediate supervisor or manager.

The communication materials being used at OCC often focused on individual campuses or projects without adequately reflecting the fact that each was part of a total college effort.

The findings and recommendations in this report including the need to consolidate some communication pieces, to set standards for communication materials and to more effectively communicate how each employee is affected by administrative decisions, should help OCC move toward a more efficient and focused internal communication system.