What is Employee Relations?

Definition;
Employee relations deals with the formal and informal relationships of interpersonal nature that arise from management/employee interactions in working situations.

(Bennett R., 1997)

Elements of Employee Relations

1. Policies of communication for improving cooperation between management and workers and the control of employee loyalty and the minimization of conflict.

2. Systems of communication for involving employees (eg. in management programs and in the improvement of customer care).

Elements of Employee Relations

3. Strategies for managing relations between a company and its employees.

4. Procedures of communication for securing employee participation in the management of enterprise.

5. Communication practices between management and workers in order to maintain harmony and respect.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

WHAT EMPLOYEES WANT?
The view taken by several companies seems to be that their employees want (and deserve);

1. Meaningful work: Employees need to feel proud of their work. They want suitable challenges and the freedom to pursue them. They want to be in the game, not on the bench.

2. High standards: They dislike losing organizations and don't want to hang around with losers.

3. A clear sense of purpose and direction: They want to read good and quality information. Timely, relevant and meaningful (truthful) information is a must.

...WHAT EMPLOYEES WANT?

4. Internal systems that support rather than impede their efforts, and freedom to pursue some things that are important to them.

5. A good working conditions: This means reciprocal caring, coupled with some sense of justice and an assurance they won't be taken advantage of.

6. To be and feel competent.

THE FUNCTIONS OF EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

1. Getting (and keeping) the people solidly behind the organization's core purpose and objectives. In short, they are committed.

2. Letting people know through countless ways—that they're important. They are cared about—first as people, and then as professionals. They need to be respected.

3. Through personal as well as structured means, the communication practices must be able to support the performance of employees.
EMPLOYEE RELATIONS – PARTNERSHIP CONTEXT MAY INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

1. Employee involvement for competitiveness.
2. Training, personal development and support.
3. Equality of opportunities.
4. Representational arrangements.
5. Forms of financial involvement.
6. Occupational health and safety in working environment.
7. Composition of the workforce.
8. Co-operation with change, including new forms of work organization.
10. Adaptability, flexibility and innovation.

SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYEE RELATIONS - MANAGEMENT COOPERATION PROGRAM

1. Commitment. This must be driven from the top. CEO is committed to the process, and this filters to the management team and, ultimately all members.
2. Credibility. CEO have to do what they say they’re going to do and communicate their reasons. Employee communication vehicles allow CEO to share information about the company’s goals and objectives. Workers then feel they are an important part of the business.
3. Patience. It’s not going to happen overnight. It’s difficult for both management and workers to change.

SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYEE RELATIONS - MANAGEMENT COOPERATION PROGRAM

4. Empowerment. Work from the bottom up: People working on the floor know how to do the job.
5. Communication - Publicize success. Let everyone know about successful accomplishments, but also be honest about failures.
6. Persistence. Don't give up. Perhaps 5% of your workforce may not want changes; you can't worry about them. Demonstrated successes help workers to change.

SOME ORIENTATION GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

1. Orientation should begin with the most relevant and immediate kinds of information and then proceed to more general policies of the business. It should occur at a pace appropriate for the employee.
2. The most significant part of orientation is the human side, giving new employees knowledge of what superiors and coworkers are like, telling them how long it should take to reach standards of effective work, and encouraging them to seek help and advice when needed.
3. New employees should be "sponsored" or directed by an experienced worker or supervisor who can respond to questions and keep in close touch during the induction period.

...SOME ORIENTATION GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

4. Employees accurately assess task demands and skills necessary to do the job.
5. New employees should be gradually introduced to the people with whom they will work, rather than given superficial introductions to all of them on the first day.
6. New employees should be allowed sufficient time to feel comfortable with their job before demands are increased.

COMMUNICATION PROGRAM SHOULD FOLLOW A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

The steps are:
1. Determine communication training needs and objectives;
2. Develop communication training criteria;
3. Choose the communication trainer;
4. Develop communication training material consistent with the objectives;
5. Plan, implement, and evaluate the program.
**Grapevine**, refers to all informal communication that occurs in an organization.

"No less than 75 to 90 percent of information carded along the grapevine is factual. Everyone thinks the grapevine is only about rumors - it's not. An active grapevine is actually the sign of a healthy organization."

Beverly Davenport Sypher, University of Kansas (1998)

"Communicate WITH employees, not TO them. Interaction is important after formal announcements have been made."

Grapevines connect people to organizational goals, socialize newcomers to the network and help all employees make better sense of their environment.

Properly nurtured, the corporate grapevine can be a valuable asset. It can help you:
1. Get a feel for the morale of your organization.
2. Understand the anxieties of your work force.
3. Evaluate your formal communication efforts and see if they are working.

Ignoring the grapevine or try to kill it → it will inevitably lead to:
1. Low morale.
2. Lower productivity.
3. Misinformation and misunderstanding.

The grapevine is a "very important source of information that grows out of office politics. By not participating in office politics in a positive way, employees may be stunting their professional growth, respect and trust."

"Trust is the most powerful tool an organization can possess. Without trust, simple fears, poor communication and many other natural human emotions can be the biggest obstacles to achieving business/corporate success."
What is internal communication (IC)?

Internal communication refers to the almost constant interactions within your organization that convey meaning. Therefore, internal communication encompasses both overt communication like meetings, memos etc, and more casual forms of communication such as gossip and body language.

How significant is internal communication?

IC is significant in any organization because it is the building block of the organizational culture. The organizational culture is the atmosphere of the organization based on its values, mission and work processes. When every member of the organization holds the same values, understands the work policies and procedures in the same way, and is focused on the same mission, the organizational culture promotes much more effective use of resources then under a culture that is more diffuse in its interpretation.

Benefit of internal communication?

- Employees can make more decisions themselves since they have the tools and knowledge to know the "right" decisions in line with the organization's goals;
- Staff can identify better with the goals, mission and procedures of the organization, which can result in a sense of "making a difference" and increase effort and efficiency;
- Programs and departments share more resources and information resulting in less duplication of work and stronger impact as a whole organization;
- Day-to-day conflict can be reduced since a lot of conflict is the result of conflicting ideas on what is important to the organization.

Basic Principles of internal communication?

- Develop a long-term focus
- Identify clear values for your organization
- Define the specific goals for your internal communication strategy
- Use comprehensive, pervasive methods
- Be consistent in your messages

The Process of internal communication?

1. Taking a close look at your organization
   - What are your organizations mission and goals?
   - What is your organization's structure?
   - Who makes up your organization?
   - What characterises your organizational culture and internal communication?
   - What communication tools are used within your organization?
   - What are your internal communication needs?
   - How do you answer these questions?

2. Developing a strategy
3. Monitoring and evaluation
The Process of internal communication?

2. Developing a strategy
   - Determine your goal
   - Determine your objectives
   - Identify your key messages
   - Define your audience
   - Identify tools and tactics
   - Develop an implementation plan
   - Finalize your strategy

3. Monitoring, evaluation and updates
   You may have completed and implemented your internal communication strategy, but that does not mean that your work is done and you can file your strategy away. As with any organization or communication strategy, an internal communication strategy requires continual evaluation and updates.

Tools and Tactics of IC

Tool is the instrument that can be used to reach the audience, while a tactic is the manner in which the tool being used.

In-Person Communication
   Advantages:
   - It is personal, direct and conducive to two-way communication.
   - Body language and other social conventions are visible.
   - Fast in getting feedback from your audience.
   - More informal and have more social aspects then many other forms.

Tools and Tactics of IC

In-Person Communication
1. All staff meetings (if your organization is small).
2. Individual meetings (communicate sensitive issues).
3. Recognition program (Recognizing the contribution and achievement of staff).
4. Social events (Birthday celebrations, Shared Lunches & Friday afternoon social outings)

Tools and Tactics of IC

Printed Communication
   Advantages:
   - Easy way to communicate large amount of information.
   - Audience can access in their own time.
   - Long lasting communication.
   - People can access whenever they are in the office.
   - Can be posted in strategic locations to attract the maximum of attention.
   - Can reach around the world, even to those who do not have access to internet and email.
   - Printed communication plays in meeting legal requirements and other tasks such as contracts, invoices and accounts.
Tools and Tactics of IC

Printed Communication

Disadvantages:
>
 Printing and disseminating communication in print can be costly in any large quantity.
>
 Audience has the option to simply discard communication process as soon as they lose interest.
>
 A lengthy process and time consuming.
>
 Conductive to one way communication.
>
 Can carry more weight then more casual communication.
>
 Can have legal implications and can create issues of privacy.

Tools and Tactics of IC

Printed Communication

Internal newsletter:
> An ideal way to communicate information such as new staff, changes in policies and procedures, program updates and organizational developments.
> In creating a newsletter the following questions need to be considered;
> What information will it include?
> Who is responsible for writing the content?
> Who is responsible for compiling and editing all the stories?
> How will you disseminate it?
> How frequently will it go out?
> Who will be responsible for approving the content?
> And many more...

Tools and Tactics of IC

Printed Communication

>
 Staff handbook -- used as resource that staff can turn to when they have a question about the organization's policies and procedures. It is a good tactic to use to ensure that staff are clear on their rights, entitlements and responsibilities, and can help ensure a smooth relationship between staff and the organization.
>
 > Resource library.
>
 > Notice board.
>
 > Email.
>
 > Monthly or bi-weekly e-newsletter.
>
 > Tele/video conferencing.
>
 > Intranet/Website.