

# Let's get this party started right!

2010 is here! What are your business resolutions for the upcoming year? Over the past few weeks, we've talked about goal setting, marketing calendars, budgeting and other activities designed to move your business in the direction YOU want. However, most businesses require help to attain goals set by ownership/management. In other words, you can't do it alone. How can you engage individuals around you and solicit their help in achieving your business objectives? You can do several things! Augmenting compensation packages, working hours incentives, goal based parties, individual or team recognition... but it all starts with communication. What is your staff communication plan for 2010? Here are a few pointers:



- 1. Meet consistently-** When meetings vary, it is hard for staff members to get accustomed to meeting times. If you are instituting a new meeting schedule, staff members can experience apprehension when planning to attend a meeting. Some may think "*Why are we doing this? Did I do something wrong? Is something wrong?*" We will discuss how to avoid those reactions more in point two, but realize that people crave consistency in the work place and adapting to a set schedule can help achieve that goal. Whether you meet weekly, biweekly, monthly or quarterly, set a time and stick with it. You may consider holding departmental meetings on a more frequent basis, if your business type allows. If an emergency pops up feel free to meet concerning the matter, but make sure individuals know that the emergency meeting is outside the normal meeting rotation.
- 2. Meeting notifications should include agendas-** The "why are we meeting" question can be easily resolved via an attached agenda. A simple list of general topics let people mentally prepare for a meeting, and they encourage well thought out questions and comments from attendees. Depending on the make up of your staff, you can post a meeting notification on a staff bulletin board, print a memo for all staff members and/or e-mail notifications to staff members. Make sure you have some way to record when staff members receive the notification (initialing the posted notification, requesting a return receipt on the e-mail, requiring a response from a text message, etc.)
- 3. Make sure to include overtly positive portions of the meeting-** Use your staff meetings to recognize positive aspects of the business or organization. Recognize outstanding business results, individual accomplishments and/or departmental efforts. It is important to discuss areas that need improvement during staff meetings, but some individuals within your organization may perceive corrective measures as "negative". It is important to balance corrective measures with positive examples within your business via recognition.
- 4. Include an open forum-** If you are disseminating information to a larger group, it is important to open yourself to feedback from those around you. Feedback should be broken up into two parts: feedback from the staff perspective and feedback from a customer/client perspective. In most organizations, staff has first contact with customers or community individuals. Their interaction can provide quality insights while simultaneously encouraging empathy with your clients. Remember, what your staff may want (shorter hours, more pay, less complex services) may vastly differ from what your customer wants (more convenient hours, more value for their dollar, better service). By utilizing your staff as an advocate for your client base, you can more effectively balance these two viewpoints. **REMEMBER TO WRITE SUGGESTIONS DOWN DURING THE MEETING!** Your staff will continue to share information IF they feel their comments make a difference.
- 5. Keep a booklet dedicated to meetings-** One of your agenda items should be a recap of steps taken to address issues from previous meetings. If staff knows you are taking steps to address concerns, they will view meetings as a more valuable tool. If you have a way to record agendas and feedback, that information collected will aid in goal setting and future development. Businesses spend

millions of dollars every year to utilize focus groups to determine goal setting and product/service direction. When utilized properly, employee meetings can go a long way towards formulating an in-house focus group that encourages positive change within your organization.

When encouraging development, communication is key. Resolve in 2010 to improve your internal communication and watch your business or organization grow. As always, remember that Emporia Main Street has archives which include past weekly e-news editions. [You can take a look back by accessing the Emporia Main Street E-News Archive \(Click HERE\).](#)

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