Exploring the role of internal communication in supporting line managers to enhance employee engagement

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Line managers are frequently identified in employee surveys as one of the most trusted and preferred sources of information. As line managing happens at all levels, there is considerable scope for using them as an internal communication channel (Ruck 2012). Line managers can have a significant impact on staff engagement, with line manager relationships accounting for 80% of decisions to engage or disengage (Gallup and the Training Foundation cited by Smith 2011). Yet despite overwhelming evidence highlighting the importance of line manager communication, organisations often fail to prioritise communication skills resulting in missed opportunities to engage staff. This project will argue that the role of the line manager is critical in the internal communication process.

At xxx university a recent staff survey indicated that over 76% of staff felt that dialogue with their line manager was good or excellent (appendix 1). In terms of internal communication, this is interesting particularly as there is no formal cascade process in place nor regular checks or guidance for line managers in terms of passing on information from senior management. As there are only a limited number of regular communication channels for corporate information (namely a weekly corporate newsletter and occasional bulk emails), the role of line manager communication could be regarded as highly important for transmitting messages. However, suggestions made by staff in the survey indicate that information does not always cascade down either via managers or across teams (appendix 1.2). This highlights a potential contradiction in terms of how staff feel towards their manager and the effectiveness of their role in communicating with their staff, which may affect levels of engagement.

This project will investigate:

- Attitudes held towards internal communications and how line managers communicate.
- Support received for communicating with their teams.
- Staff attitudes towards their line managers.
- Links between engagement and line manager communication.

1.2 Boundaries of the study

This is a limited, small-scale study of one specific type of organisation. The choice of qualitative research methods means that the findings are only indicative of a small sample of opinion. Further
research would be required in order to make generalised conclusions that reveal wider patterns of behaviour that could be applied to other types of organisation.
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 What is internal communication?

Internal communications happens constantly within organisations (Welch and Jackson 2007) and is important since “clear, consistent and continuous communications builds employee engagement” (Kress et al. 2005 cited by Ruck 2012, p.82). Despite its importance, there are considerable gaps in theory (Forman and Argenti cited by Welch and Jackson 2007) and numerous different definitions of internal communications, limiting the extent to which effective comparisons and conclusions can be made.

Welch and Jackson describe internal communication as “…the strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders within organisations across a number of interrelated dimensions including internal line manager communication, internal team communication, internal peer project communication and internal corporate communication” (2007, p.184).

This definition provides a useful starting point as it refers to the ways in which ‘managed’ communication is disseminated throughout an organisation with clear responsibilities based on an employee’s role or position within a company. It is particularly pertinent to this study as it refers to line manager communication as a distinct dimension, an area which often only warrants a brief mention by much communication literature.

2.2 What is effective internal communication?

Many researchers claim that two-way symmetrical communication is ideal and characterises ‘excellent’ organisations (Welch and Jackson 2007) as it “attempts to balance the interests of the organisation and its publics” (Grunig cited by Welch and Jackson, p.187). In large organisations, the extent to which this can be done in practice is limited. However, Grunig (cited by Welch and Jackson, p.187) claims that communication can be considered symmetrical “if... content meets the employees’ need to know rather than the managements’ need to tell”. It could be argued though that assumptions are still being made by employers about what an employee ‘needs’ to know leading to a top-down approach to communications. Nevertheless, the concept of symmetrical communication raises an interesting opportunity for line managers who can act as the ‘face’ of the company, interacting with staff to encourage two-way communication.
2.3 What is engagement theory?

“Engagement is a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values... The organisation must work to nurture, maintain and grow engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee.” (Robinson and Hayday 2009, p.2).

MacLeod and Clarke (cited by Ruck 2012) claim to have found 50 definitions of employee engagement, highlighting the lack of consensus surrounding the term. There is only limited research on employee engagement (Saks cited by Ruck 2012), and with just 12% of the UK population describing themselves as highly engaged (Towers Perrin Global Workforce Study cited by Robinson and Hayday 2009), there is huge scope for further research to sway the “massive middle of ambivalently minded staff” (Robinson and Hayday 2009, p.30).

In order to build successful employee engagement, the following enablers of engagement have been suggested (MacLeod and Clarke 2012):

1. **Strong strategic narrative** – visible, empowering leadership providing clear information about the organisation, where it’s come from and where it’s going.
2. **Engaging managers** – who treat their people as individuals and encourage them to succeed.
3. **Employee voice** – giving staff the opportunity to reinforce and challenge views as well as contributing to the solution.
4. **Organisational integrity** – a belief in the organisation and its behaviour.

This approach is relevant for this project as it refers to the role managers’ play in engaging employees. Line managers are referred to throughout engagement literature, with their relationship described as ‘crucial’ in that it “impacts the extent to which employees feel valued, involved [and] interested in their jobs” (Robinson and Hayday 2009, p.2). However, engagement literature has limited information on the specific communication skills required by managers and how internal communications can provide more support in helping managers engage and communicate with their staff.
What role do line managers play and why is it important?

A line manager is described as someone “… directly accountable for obtaining results through people in his or her organisation” (MacNeil 2004, p.93). They act as a distribution channel for information to their teams and a supplier of information to senior managers (Thompson cited by MacNeil 2004). They facilitate “knowledge sharing” (MacNeil 2004, p.95) and set out controls and routines such as performance and appraisal meetings, which are both influenced by and can influence the internal corporate culture of the organisation (Ruck 2012). Specific roles vary depending on the organisation’s size, structure and culture as well as being influenced by the line managers’ professional or functional background (Currie and Proctor cited by MacNeil 2004). Line managers are in a unique position of trust, with 48% of all UK employees believing them to be the most trusted and reliable communications channel (Tench and Yeomans 2006). Although this varies from company to company, the overall suggestion is that line managers occupy an important role in communicating with staff.

Line management communication relates to matters concerning employee roles and the impact of the managers’ own personal communication. This type of internal communication is focused on day-to-day activities such as human resource management, finance management and access to resources (Ruck 2012). There may also be opportunities for line managers to get involved in strategic planning activity, which can have a positive impact on the quality of strategic decisions taken and subsequent organisational performance (MacNeil 2004). However, this is not an automatic role for this level of management. DeRidder claims that effective task communication creates staff commitment and non-task communication creates trust (cited by Ruck 2012). However, such statements must be made with caution as they assume a homogenous group of employees who react in the same way to different types of communication. Furthermore, commitment may be influenced by additional factors. Meyer and Allen (cited by Welch and Jackson 2007) identified three types of workplace commitment:

1) choose to be in an organisation;
2) forced to remain there due to costs of leaving;
3) feel obliged to be there.

Communication can be defined as formal i.e. relying on impersonal channels such as written memos or team meetings, or it can be informal, personalised and often impromptu i.e. face-to-face interactions such as individualised coaching (Stohl and Redding cited by Johlke and Duhan 2000).
However, this divide could be seen as too simplistic as there may be various interpretations of what constitutes formal/informal, for example, a team meeting could be informal and impromptu, and coaching could be a more formal method of communication.

Two-way, symmetrical communication is a characteristic of excellent organisations and line managers have an important role in this, delivering messages and presenting information in a way to encourage feedback to reveal the level of understanding within their team (Ruck 2012). Face-to-face communication is effective as it allows for timely exchange, feedback and evaluation (Tushman and Nadler cited by Johlke and Duhan 2000) and is essential for effective supervisor-employee relations (Jablin cited by Johlke and Duhan 2000). Subsequently, line managers should have excellent communication skills and the ability to interpret messages from staff and those cascaded from senior management (Tench and Yeomans 2009). They should motivate, inspire and involve their teams, enabling people to give their best (Robinson and Hayday 2009). This is essential “in an era of apparent constant change and erosion of corporate loyalty, (when) interpersonal communication skills are vital to promoting employee attachment to the organisation” (Brunetto and Farr-Wharton cited by Bambacas and Patrickson 2008, p.51). However, this does assume that all managers are motivated and have the skills required to perform their role effectively.

Line managers can add value to the communication exchange by putting information into context for their teams (Quirke 2008). To do this, line managers must have a clear understanding of the issues and implications of the message for their staff as well as understanding how it fits into the overall organisation. If managers fail to translate corporate messages into a local context for their staff, the message can seem remote and irrelevant to staff who may reject the information and feel disengaged as a result. This highlights an opportunity for internal communications to provide support through appropriate training to communicate effectively with their teams and tools such as briefing kits or newsletters which clearly explain the information in an easily digestible format.

Line managers must be clear about goals and expectations and effectively manage performance, with time taken to give explanations and feedback (Robinson and Hayday 2009). Johlke and Duhan (2000) suggest good communication and feedback allows managers to clarify their employees’ job roles and contribution to the organisation. This can improve job performance and satisfaction as staff understand the wider impact of not performing their role successfully.
2.5 What role do line managers play in engaging their staff?

“People join companies, they leave managers” (Robinson and Hayday 2009, p.34). This indicates the importance of the line manager relationship, demonstrating how line managers have almost unrivalled power to engage or disengage their staff (MacLeod and Brady 2008). Engagement studies consistently demonstrate how manager behaviour and the work environments they create around them have a more direct effect than reward programmes on the level of staff engagement (MacLeod and Brady 2007). Therefore they should be at the centre of any engagement or communication strategy to ensure they support it otherwise they may become an extremely influential obstruction to it.

Line managers are closest to daily operations so they have a unique understanding of day-to-day activities. They are often seen as “the personification of the organisation” (MacLeod and Brady 2008, p.198) with the power to influence how their staff feel towards their workplace. As Houlihan (2001) points out, they play a critical mediating role in how people see and experience the organisation, demonstrating an opportunity for internal communication to support managers to achieve this and enhance engagement. However, communication skills tend not to be prioritised by senior managers as a vital skill to be developed and communication theory is rarely included as a core subject in leadership learning (Ruck 2011). Indeed, although much of the literature indicates that a key attribute of managers is the ability to influence through communication, rarely are managers selected or developed through advanced communication skills training programmes to develop their individual ability (Oliver 2000).

Feeling ‘well informed’ is central to achieving engagement, therefore, line managers need to be empowered to deliver information in a way that encourages discussion within their teams to achieve good quality, two-way communication. Internal communications can support this and encourage engagement by clearly highlighting the corporate values of the organisation, ensuring everyone knows what is expected of them and appropriate behaviour (Quirke 2008).

Another key aspect of engagement is to give employees a ‘voice’ and allow for feedback and discussion. However, appropriate forums for this are often not provided or accepted, with employee research indicating that 69% of employees do not feel that they can speak up without being perceived as negative (Bloomfield et al. cited by Quirke 2008). Internal communications can
help by providing the tools to do this and creating a culture of acceptance and encouraging feedback.

2.6 **How can internal communications support line managers?**

For managers to be able to put information into context for their staff, they need to understand the context fully themselves (Quirke 2008). This is where the role of internal communication is essential, enabling managers to understand what is required of them and how this will affect their staff. Managers may feel isolated or subject to decisions out of their control or they may be unclear of what is expected of them (Houlihan 2001). Internal communication can help by ensuring managers are fully briefed on ideas and understand the context of the message. Good practice should be shared and celebrated to ensure that line managers are aware of what is expected of them. Briefing notes or skills coaching to deliver messages or present ideas will help line managers carry out their role effectively and engage in the vital conversation required with their staff to ensure full understanding.

Internal communication channels should provide opportunities for upward feedback and responses from staff, together with clear guidelines and timescales to ensure managers carry this out (Quirke 2008). Feedback should be used to ensure understanding and to help senior managers or originators of the message to see how the information has been absorbed by staff. However, this requires positive and motivated action on behalf of line managers, senior managers and staff receiving the information, which may not be the case. Furthermore, it might not be practically possible for all messages to be absorbed and discussed in this way, creating opportunities for internal communicators to investigate different methods for obtaining feedback and discussion.

Cascade processes are often used to pass messages down an organisation; however, managers further down the chain may not have full understanding of the original reason behind the information and may not be able to explain to their staff the rationale behind the message (Quirke 2008). There is also the risk of managers interpreting information in a way to suit their own opinions and ideals, which may be at odds with the original meaning intended by the message creator. Equally, they may distance themselves from the information they are presenting, which can undermine the message. This can limit opportunities to make useful contributions to discussions about the information, reducing the impact of the message.
Line managers must ensure staff understand information to avoid them feeling detached from the message and subsequently the organisation (MacLeod and Brady 2008). Internal communications can provide guidance and support for managers to deliver this. Ideally, checks and measures should be introduced to ensure messages are relayed in the way they were originally intended, however, this may not always be practical and there is little research on this. Appropriate internal communication channels can also ensure that feedback is obtained which in turn creates opportunities to produce more relevant and focused messages that are adjusted in response to staff opinion.

Team meetings should be used to strengthen the relationship between line managers and their staff and internal communications can provide support for this in the form of skills training to encourage discussion and guidelines in planning agendas and preparing for meetings. Internal communicators can provide guidelines concerning what information to pass on to avoid overloading staff with irrelevant information (Quirke 2008). Staff feedback should be gathered and used to style the agenda for future meetings. However, this again relies on motivated line managers who will check understanding and gather feedback from their teams. According to research 41% of communication practitioners feel that line managers do not rate internal communications very highly indicating a lack of interest amongst managers who don’t see it as their responsibility to tell anybody anything (Ruck and Trainor 2011). This may be because they lack the relevant information to deliver messages in an appropriate manner or they may be too busy. Line managers may not have the personality traits required to stimulate discussion or they may be fearful of running engaging meetings (Ruck and Trainor 2011). Therefore, a holistic approach to communication should be adopted to ensure messages are transmitted effectively.

Overall, the literature review reveals that although research exists regarding the role of line managers and their contribution to staff engagement, there is little in the way of specific guidelines and information regarding the exact role of internal communications. Furthermore, the impact of line manager communication is generally not measured (Ruck and Trainor 2011).
3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Project rationale

The literature review revealed a gap in research surrounding the exact role of internal communications in supporting line managers to engage their staff. There is minimal research into the effectiveness of line manager communication and how far this can affect levels of staff engagement. Therefore, this project will investigate the following objectives:

1. What is the general attitude towards internal communications at xxx university and how informed do staff feel?

2. How do line managers communicate and how can internal communications provide support?

3. How do staff feel towards their workplace? Is this affected by their line manager relationship?

3.2 Research methodology

Qualitative research was deemed most appropriate as it enables the researcher to carry out in-depth research to gain an insight into staff opinion towards internal communication, how it supports line manager communications, and subsequent levels of staff engagement. Some quantitative research was already available in the form of staff surveys, which provided top level statistics that guided the project design, namely that most staff felt that they had good or excellent dialogue with their line manager (appendix 1). However, the secondary research did not reveal what this dialogue entails, if and how it is supported by internal communications and how engaged staff felt as a result, therefore warranting further research.

The choice of qualitative research is typical of the majority of research in public relations and marketing communication, which adopts an interpretive and realist (or positivist) worldview (Daymon and Holloway 2002). This approach looks at how people “make sense of their social worlds and how they express these understandings through language... personal style and social rituals” (Deacon et al. cited by Daymon and Holloway, 2002, p.4). The interpretative approach emphasises
that in order to understand a world, researchers must involve themselves in it to see the situation from the subject’s point of view and focus on the person rather than the external forces affecting their behaviour.

Advantages of qualitative research (Daymon and Holloway 2002):

- Understand subject’s world view.
- Suitable for small-scale study.
- Holistic approach allowing for numerous variables to be studied.
- Flexible approach which can alter during the research as subjects reveal information.
- Research can take place in subjects’ natural setting so they may be more relaxed and natural in their responses.

Disadvantages of qualitative research:

- Risk of becoming too subjective – both the subjects’ responses and analysis of data.
- Difficult to replicate.
- Difficult to make generalisations.
- Lack of transparency.

3.3 Research design

Research was carried out via semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with six members of staff (appendix 4). This approach allowed ideas to be probed and motivations to be investigated (Bell 2005). Secondary data from a staff survey (appendix 2) already provided a good indication of attitudes towards internal communication at the university, so interviews were carried out to examine why people held a particular opinion and to gain “vivid, accurate, inclusive accounts that are based on personal experience” (Burgess cited by Easterby-Smith et al. 2008, p. 144).

The semi-structured design (appendix 3) produces responses that are easily recorded and analysed (Bell 2005), allowing comparisons to be made. Interviews are also suitable in this case as respondents may be reluctant to be truthful about certain aspects of the topic, such as their true feelings towards their line manager or those they line manage, making a confidential, one-to-one situation the most appropriate setting (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008). Questions were based on the secondary data and the four enablers of engagement (MacLeod and Clarke 2012) to provide an insight into the level of engagement of each respondent.
3.4 Sampling design

Convenience sampling was used with the researcher selecting a specific group of people through a combination of verbal recommendations and investigation into the respondent’s role within the organisation (Daymon and Holloway 2002). This approach was appropriate as the research relied upon the willingness of respondents to take part and verbal recommendations proved useful in identifying participants. The sample group was heterogeneous, selected to gain an insight into some of the different views held across the organisation based on specific differing characteristics (appendix 4):

- Level of seniority.
- Academic or support staff.
- Length of service.

There are no rigid rules or guidelines for sample size and some of the most insightful studies have been based on very small samples (Daymon and Holloway 2002). A sample size of six people was chosen as this enabled a snapshot of opinion across some of the services and schools to be achieved in a short timeframe.

3.5 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is primarily concerned with data reduction i.e. cutting down large amounts of information into manageable chunks via coding and summarising into simplified patterns. It is also concerned with interpretation i.e. bringing meaning to the data by generating concepts and theories to explain findings (Daymon and Holloway 2002). This was achieved by reviewing the transcripts and coding data according to key words and assessing whether responses were positive, negative or neutral. This approach allows for patterns and themes to be identified, however, it does run the risk of potentially useful information being ignored if it doesn’t fit within the coding system (Daymon and Holloway 2002).

To ensure the study can stand up to scrutiny, interpretations of the interviews were approved by respondents (informant validation) who were sent a summary of conclusions via email. When analysing the data, consideration was taken regarding the impact of the researcher during the interview process as well as the potential for bias or the researcher’s own view affecting conclusions and generalisations made.
3.6 Limitations

Due to time restrictions only two schools (out of 10) and two departments (out of eight) were investigated. The choice of departments and roles was affected by the willingness of informants to take part. Schools and departments within the university are extremely varied, covering a range of educational subjects or a range of support services. This means that generalisations, even between apparently similar ‘academic’ or ‘service’ work areas must be made with caution. Furthermore, individuals who are willing to talk about their experiences may sometimes have an uncommon approach to their work – they might be frustrated, attention seeking or hostile, which will need to be considered when drawing conclusions (Daymon and Holloway 2002). In order to identify large-scale patterns, further qualitative research could investigate a wider mix of departments and roles to gain a greater insight into opinions held across the organisation.

As with all qualitative research, there are risks and ethical considerations that must be taken into account. As Jones points out, “no research exists without presupposition” (cited by Easterby-Smith et al. 2008, p.142), indicating that all researchers have some level of understanding of a topic before carrying out a study, raising the possibility of bias, both in the design of interview questions and during the interview itself through body language or tone of voice. Interviews are highly subjective since they investigate one person’s point of view and they also rely on the skill of the interviewer to elicit information. There is also the risk of subjectivity when interpreting the answers, with the interviewer imposing their own reference frame on the results (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008). In terms of ethics, the interviewer must remain sensitive to difficult issues at all times and not disclose confidential information.

In order to limit the level of bias, the interview questions were prepared in advance, using the secondary data and the four enablers of engagement (MacLeod and Clarke 2012) as the basis for question design. Although the aim was to let the respondent answer questions without interruption, on some occasions ‘probes’ were used to encourage them to focus on specific points of the question when they may have been going off the subject (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008).
4.0 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Summary of findings:

4.1 Objective one: Attitude towards internal communications

a) How informed are respondents?

All respondents indicated that they felt well-informed. When probed, it emerged that the more senior the respondent’s role, the more informed they felt due to attendance at numerous committees and meetings. Less senior respondents felt that although they were aware of things, they were less informed about large-scale changes or strategic things going on at the university, consistent with a top-down flow of information.

“(I’m well informed)... (although) that’s probably due to my position rather than internal communications” (director).

“(I am more informed) than... ever before and I think that’s to do with the hierarchy and what you get told in senior management meetings” (senior lecturer).

“We’re well informed... on a minute level, but maybe for the bigger changes... we’re not that well informed” (officer – lower middle manager).

“I know things are happening to bring about strategic development to the university... (but) I wouldn’t say I’m overly informed on what they are” (officer – non manager).
b) Do respondents receive enough information?

Respondents receive enough information to do their role effectively from a variety of channels including the staff newsletter, meetings and emails, but they found that only some of the information was relevant to them.

“I think information should be more specific depending on if you are school or service staff.”

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![Email Newsletter Manager Meetings Networking Other Graph]

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Email Newsletter Manager Meetings Networking Other

c) What additional information would they like to receive?

Requests for more information included more cross-university news and more ‘genuine’ information and updates from senior management indicating a desire for more knowledge about the strategic direction of the university. This supports the ‘four enablers of engagement’ (MacLeod and Clarke 2012) which suggest that staff want a strong strategic narrative to provide information about the overall direction of an organisation.

“The staff newsletter is very PR.”

“I would like to hear more about what is going on within the university – if you understand (more about what is going on) then you can do your job better.”
d) **What channels of communication are preferred?**

Several respondents indicated that word of mouth was a quicker and more effective way of finding out information and there was a direct correlation between length of service and use of this channel.

> Networking is my way of finding out what is going on” (19 years service).

> “I suppose because I know lots of people – that’s the main way I find things out... I generally tend to find things out quickly” (9 years service).

Email and face-to-face were the preferred methods of communication amongst respondents. However, this choice depended upon the message to be communicated and the practicality of using a particular channel.

> “... It depends on the communication as to how I want to find out about it.”

> “I prefer someone to present it to me... to take questions. Obviously that’s not practical to do with everything but you don’t get a lot of opportunities to do this (here.)”

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e) **How can communications be improved?**

Suggestions to improve internal communications varied widely. These included more verbal communications, more networking opportunities, more use of existing channels and more visible leadership.

> “People don’t know how to tell other people what’s happening.”

> “Sometimes you just need to bring people together.”
4.2 Objective two: How do line managers communicate and how can internal communications provide support?

a) How do line managers communicate?

Line managers tend to communicate informally with their teams both face-to-face and via email with occasional filtering of information. This is largely due to convenience as most respondents sat with or near their teams and lacked the time to filter information. Several respondents whose managers did interpret information felt that the message was biased to their manager’s world view, supporting Quirke’s (2008) suggestion that messages can be distorted as they are cascaded down the chain. From the research, it is difficult to identify if interpretation of messages, or lack of it, has an impact on the value of the message received.

“I haven’t got the time (to filter information).”

“I expect staff to work out what is relevant to them.”

b) Do respondents have enough support to communicate with their teams?

Although all respondents felt that they had enough support to communicate with their teams half suggested ways that internal communications could provide additional support. Most suggestions identified the need for more awareness of what other teams are doing around the organisation which would help them in their daily work. This supports Quirke’s (2008) suggestion that line managers should understand the context of the message and how staff fit into the bigger picture in order to communicate effectively.

“I would like updates on projects and programme boards which could inform your planning and work.”

“I would like more awareness of what each team is doing on a regular basis – although this isn’t necessarily a marketing thing.”

There were calls for assistance with informal communication within teams and less hierarchy which can lead to mixed or diluted messages.
“Help teams to communicate... Maybe training for lower middle managers... to help them work better within their team... small (teams) tend to be quite informal... when you’re trying to get consistency... it’s quite difficult.”

“When you’re working in a large place like this... it’s very hierarchical – you can’t just speak to someone. You have to go to their manager who will then speak to you... a lot of things get lost in translation.”
4.3 Objective three: How do staff feel towards their workplace? Is this affected by their line manager relationship?

a) How satisfied were respondents with their line manager?

Satisfaction with line manager varied from very dissatisfied to very satisfied, and this influenced how motivated by their manager they felt – those with a poor or average relationship were not motivated by their manager.

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Those with a good or neutral relationship with their line manager felt their manager communicated well via meetings, email and had a good rapport with the team. Those with poorer relationships did not feel their manager communicated well. This suggests that managers should have excellent communication skills in order to build good working relationships, as suggested by Tench and Yeomans (2009).

“I wouldn’t say he does anything particularly well... I might get something but it will only be after I’ve asked for it and then I’ll get his version of it.”

b) Do feedback opportunities exist?

The majority of respondents (4/6) do not have opportunities to feedback to senior management and all respondents thought it would be good to have the chance to do so. One respondent has feedback opportunities due to their position in the organisation. Another has an approachable director who acts on feedback – either by implementing ideas or escalating them to senior
management. When probed, some opportunities to feedback were revealed including; school away days and examples of when ideas were implemented within a team and later adopted as an example of good practice across the university indicating that some informal feedback opportunities do exist. Suggestions to improve feedback include more discussion, transparency, senior team walking the floor, regular surveys and more open membership to project boards.

“I think people have really good ideas which are not necessarily about their own school or service.”

c) Awareness of corporate strategy

All respondents were aware of the university strategy and knew the aim that was most relevant to their area of work. Most considered the strategy in their everyday work supporting the idea of the need for a strong strategic narrative as suggested by MacLeod and Clarke’s (2012) four enablers of engagement.

“It can act as a driver to get things done.”

d) Attitudes towards the university as a workplace

Attitudes towards the university as a workplace varied considerably. Positive comments suggested it was a good place to work and several referred to the length of time they had worked at the university as an indicator of satisfaction with the organisation. However, assumptions that length of service demonstrates satisfaction should be made with caution since other variables, as identified by Meyer and Allen (cited by Welch and Jackson 2007) may explain workplace commitment. Furthermore, as one respondent pointed out, it could also be seen as negative as it can mean a stagnant workforce, opposed to change:

“There are so many people that have been here for so long that they’ve seen it all before... you try to change something and they’re like, oh that’s already been done and doesn’t work.”

Negative comments referred to a lack of transparency, poor levels of senior manager support and communication and uncertainty around redundancies. Respondents also alluded to a frustrating, bureaucratic organisation with little accountability amongst staff. Several respondents suggested that changes needed to come from senior management.
“There’s a lack of community, a lack of genuine pride in working here that I think needs to come from the top down.”

“(It’s) frustrating because I can see the wealth of potential here... it just needs good leadership to achieve success.”

e) Link between line manager relationship and attitude towards the university

No clear pattern emerged between level of satisfaction with the line manager relationship and overall attitude towards the university. Of the two respondents with a poor relationship, one held a relatively negative view of the university and the other was neutral, referring to the fact that it was their first and only job. The two respondents with a very good line manager relationship varied in their opinions of the workplace – one finding it a good place to work and the other expressing his frustration with the organisation. This challenges the extent of line managers’ ‘unrivalled’ power to engage staff, as suggested by MacLeod and Brady (2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Satisfied with line manager relationship</th>
<th>Attitude towards the university</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>☹</td>
<td>“I used to feel really motivated... whereas now I feel like we’re a bit used”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>☹</td>
<td>“I’ve stayed here a long time – that is a good sign?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td>“this university has suited me”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td>“I find it quite a negative place”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td>“It’s a good place to work, if slightly stagnant”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td>“I find it frustrating”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research revealed both a clear role for internal communications in helping line managers communicate effectively with their teams and also demonstrated the critical role line managers play in the communication process. Line managers at xxx university tend to communicate largely in an informal way, either face-to-face or by forwarding emails and information and respondents felt they had sufficient support to communicate. However, further probing revealed various ways in which internal communications could provide additional help suggesting that line managers are not aware of the possibilities and benefits that additional communications support could provide. Managers only occasionally filter information due to time constraints which could have a negative impact on the line manager relationship. However, it is difficult to draw such conclusions based on the research sample alone suggesting the need for further research.

The majority of respondents felt they were well informed, however, there was a link between level of seniority and the amount of information they received, which is consistent with top-down communications. Information was not always relevant, which again raises an opportunity for internal communications to provide clear, concise and targeted information that meets employees' communication needs, which is consistent with Grunig's definition of symmetrical communication (cited by Welch and Jackson 2007). This would also have the added benefit of raising the profile of internal communications and attitudes held towards it amongst staff. Email and face-to-face were the preferred channels of communication and several respondents indicated the importance of networking for communication, an under-researched area in the literature. The message content influences preference of communication channel suggesting that a holistic approach to communication would reach the largest amount of staff who prefer different channels at different times.

The attitudes towards the university as a workplace varied considerably and although there were several examples of respondents with both a positive line manager relationship and a positive attitude towards the organisation, it is not possible to identify a direct causal relationship based on the research. Instead, it could be said that the line manager relationship is one of a number of variables that can affect attitudes towards the workplace and levels of engagement, as suggested by the ‘four enablers of engagement’ (MacLeod and Clarke 2012).

All respondents referred to the importance of leadership visibility for effective communication despite not being directly asked about senior leadership. This reinforces the importance of visible
leadership for effective communication and staff engagement, suggested by MacLeod and Clarke (2012). Several respondents also indicated a desire for more updates on the overall strategic direction of the organisation, another key part of MacLeod and Clarke’s (2012) engagement theory.

5.2 Recommendations:

1. Provide tools such as briefing notes and summary documents for line managers and ensure they are aware of the support internal communications can offer.

2. Encourage more face-to-face communication and networking by providing opportunities for staff to work together and informal spaces to meet and socialise.

3. Provide training to help line managers communicate with their teams more effectively. This should cover informal communication and ways to encourage discussion as well as formal communication training to run team meetings and present information.

4. Create feedback opportunities by developing a cascade process for communication that ensures a two-way flow of information between staff and management. Ensure this is carried out by incorporating communication skills into line managers’ appraisals and objectives.

5. Increase leadership visibility by encouraging senior managers to ‘walk the floor’ and provide regular updates on the organisation’s strategic progress through corporate communication channels.


Quirke, B, (2008), Making the Connections, Farnham: Gower Publishing Company.


Appendix 1: Staff Survey (October 2011)

- Selection of relevant responses.
- 86% response rate (approximately 1,160 members of staff)

How would you rate the effectiveness of the following internal communication channels?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent:</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good:</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor:</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Poor:</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know:</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1.2: Comments from Staff Survey (October 2011)

Suggestions to improve the university’s communication channels

- The notion that information cascades downward is manifestly false - it trickles slowly at best.

- Central management communications are relentlessly and often mindlessly optimistic. We received feedback from some consultation exercise about how ‘excited’ people were to be working at the university at a time of acute cuts, massively increased workloads and severe anxieties about job losses.

- Communication at all levels of management need to be more transparent, as well as the logic behind the decision making processes.

- Communication within my school is very poor. Management are poor at feeding ideas to staff and staff are poor at telling everyone else what they are up to.

- Communication within school is diabolical, very little is disseminated.

- Engage with and listen to staff!

- It seems surprising that there were not any questions relating to programme board communication. This is an area that requires immediate and extensive attention. There needs to be an effective, timely way to communicate developments from programme boards to all relevant staff - the failure of this directly impacts on daily work; planning and general efficiency of the university. It is a severe operational oversight that a system does not exist to ensure colleagues are fully aware of developments and kept up to date. Simply relying on project chairs to circulate information is not a sufficiently robust process and has not proved workable.

- More encouragement of collaboration between teams through secondments, shadowing etc.

- More face-to-face meeting opportunities rather than countless emails.

- More informal channels.

- There is too much information being communicated that is irrelevant to the job that I am paid to do.

- There needs to be greater levels of direct engagement between management and staff on the ground.
• Too much one-way communication in electronic format particularly emails.

• What is the point of "communicating" when decisions are taken without proper consultation (or a "consultation" is given when decisions have been made already in any case)?
Appendix 2: Internal communications survey (November 2012)

- Selection of relevant responses.
- 13% response rate (approximately 195 members of staff)

1. How do you prefer to receive messages, news and updates?
   a. Email – 87%
   b. Face-to-face – 33%
   c. Website – 20%
   d. Presentations – 18.5%
   e. Social media – 11%
   f. Hard copy (publications) – 10%

Comments:
- It depends on what the information is. Too many important messages are communicated via the staff newsletter and not everyone reads it either at all or straight away when it’s relevant.

2. Do you think you have opportunities to make your opinions and views known at the university?
   a. Yes – 59%
   b. No – 41%

3. How could two-way conversation be improved at xxx university?
   a. Email mailbox for suggestions – 55%
   b. Communication forum – 42%
   c. Post box for suggestions – 23%
   d. Other – 23%

Comments:
- Management need to learn how to communicate with staff.
- Senior management needs to listen to and be prepared to act on staff comments.
- Updates from different programme boards and information on how staff can contribute to them.
- Visible response/action based on suggestions and comments fed up the hierarchy.
• An environment where it is apparent that views will be heard and staff are not scared to make their opinions known.
Appendix 3: Interview questions

Background
I am looking into internal communications and staff engagement at xxx, specifically looking at the role line managers’ play in this and how internal communications can support them in their roles.

About you
1. What is your role?
2. Are you a line manager (if so, how many people do you manage)?
3. Do you work in a team? If so, how many people are in it?
4. How long have you worked here?

Feeling well informed – internal communication
5. Do you feel like you’re well informed in terms of corporate information (news, updates, strategy etc)?
6. How do you normally receive corporate information?
7. Do you receive information in a timely manner?
8. Do you feel the information you receive is relevant to you?
9. Do you think you receive enough information to help you perform your role effectively?
10. Is there any other information that you would like to receive about the university?
11. How do you prefer to receive information?

If you are a line manager:
12. Do you pass on this information to your teams? If so, how do you do this?
13. Do you feel like you have adequate support for communicating with your teams? (training or communications tools)
14. What support would you like in terms of communication tools to be able to pass messages onto your team confidently? This could be in terms of more meetings, briefing packs, manager tool kits for specific messages etc.
15. Do you interpret or filter the information you pass on or do you pass everything onto your team?
16. Do you expect your teams to filter information down to their direct reports?
17. Do you have any checks to ensure this happens?
18. Do you feel like you understand the university’s strategic goals?
19. Do you consider the university’s strategic goals when you go about your daily work?
20. Is there anything you would like introduced to improve internal communication here?

**Opportunities for upward feedback**

21. Do you feel like you have opportunities to provide feedback to senior management regarding corporate messages and information?
22. Have you ever done this? (Can you elaborate on what you did and if any action was taken as a result)

**If you are a line manager**

23. Do you have the opportunity to feedback information from your team members up to senior management?
24. How could we improve feedback opportunities here?

**Manager commitment**

25. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your immediate line manager?
26. Are you motivated by your manager?
27. Do you receive corporate information from them? (How?)
28. If yes, then do you believe they interpret the organisation's goals and present them to you in a more relevant way to you and your work/goals?
29. What do you think your manager does well, if anything, in terms of communicating messages to you?

**Engagement**

30. How would you sum up your overall attitude towards xxx as a place of work?

**AOB**

31. Is there anything else we haven’t covered that you would like to add?
### Appendix 4: Respondent profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Department or school name</th>
<th>Academic or service department</th>
<th>Line manager (how many)</th>
<th>Length of service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sports Advisor</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Yes (1)</td>
<td>1.7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Yes (6 directly, 50 indirectly)</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Head</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Yes (11)</td>
<td>19 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Yes (3)</td>
<td>9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager and PA to the Dean of School</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Yes (2)</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5: Interview guide

The interview procedure was as follows:

Prior to interview:
- Requests emailed and followed up by phone call.
- Interviews arranged at a time to suit the respondent, either at their place of work or at the researcher’s place of work.

Start of interview:
- Interviews began with an overview of the research aims and a reminder of the confidential nature of the session.
- Respondent should be asked their name, role and length of service to serve as a ‘warm up’ to the interview.
- Interviews were recorded to ensure sessions were not interrupted by note-taking.

During interview:
- Respondents encouraged to speak freely on selected topics. Interviewer to use probes to ensure interview remains on-topic.
- Interviewer to concentrate on developing rapport but with care taken to not influence the respondent via non-verbal communication.

End of interview:
- Interviews concluded with an offer to share the findings of the overall research and an agreement for the informant to approve interpretations made during the interview.

Following interview:
- Type up transcript as soon as possible.
- Run key issues/points past respondent (via email) to check validity of interpretation.
Appendix 6: Email of introduction

Dear xxx,

I’m currently studying for a professional qualification in Internal Communications and as part of my studies I am required to undertake a piece of research which will form a key section of my final dissertation.

I’ve decided to look at the subject of line manager communication, looking at what they do and are expected to do in terms of internal communication, and how this affects feelings of engagement amongst staff. I’m contacting a range of school and service staff, both line managers and team members to get an insight into general attitudes and opinions regarding internal communications at xxx.

I was wondering if you would be willing to take part in a short face-to-face interview to discuss your experiences in these areas. I’m expecting it to take no longer than around 30-45 minutes and I would be happy to meet at a place and time to suit you.

Everything discussed in the interview would be completely confidential and only used for the purpose of writing up my report. If you would like, I would be more than happy to provide you with a summary of my work and any conclusions.

Please let me know if this is something you would be happy to do.

Many thanks,
xxx
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Respondent 1</th>
<th>Respondent 2</th>
<th>Respondent 3</th>
<th>Respondent 4</th>
<th>Respondent 5</th>
<th>Respondent 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manager and PA to Dean of School</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Subject Head</td>
<td>Sports Advisor</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic/Support</td>
<td>Support (within Academic setting)</td>
<td>Support (within Academic setting)</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/Department</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure of department/school/team</td>
<td>&gt; Work in dean's office - other senior administrators work under registrar (dealing with academics).</td>
<td>&gt; I deal with non-academic messages.</td>
<td>&gt; LM is registrar - 2 registrars in school - registrar reports to dean.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of service</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>1.7 years</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line manager (how many manage)</td>
<td>Yes (2)</td>
<td>Yes (3)</td>
<td>Yes (11)</td>
<td>Yes (1)</td>
<td>Yes (6 directly, 50 indirectly)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel well-informed?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES/NO</td>
<td>YES/NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Yes - sometimes too much information.</td>
<td>&gt; Yes - less so recently Ex-Vice Chancellor made everything generic so didn't trust messages.</td>
<td>&gt; Yes - thanks to current role and hierarchy. &gt; Attend senior management meetings.</td>
<td>&gt; Yes - on a minute level (service by service basis). &gt; No - on a bigger scale i.e. large-scale changes/news.</td>
<td>&gt; Yes, reasonably so. &gt; Probably due to my position rather than internal communications. &gt; Due to the number of meetings I go to. &gt; Got a good overview of what is going on across the organisation from things like the academic board - don't rely on newsletters. &gt; Still get information from newsletters/websites</td>
<td>&gt; Aware of things but not overly informed on what they are (strategic development and improvements). &gt; Know how to access minutes from academic committees etc but poor general awareness of what's going on in terms of projects. &gt; Should I know this though? &gt; Would avoid repetition of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Is the information relevant?                                           | NO (not all) | NO (not all)  
> Skim staff newsletter - not all relevant.  
> Not all relevant but lots is.                                                                                                               |
|                                                                        | NO (not all) | NO (not all)  
> Not always.  
> Should be more specific depending on if you are school/staff - shouldn't all be getting same emails/information  
 e.g. school pay scales.                                                                                                                         |
|                                                                        | NO (not all) | NO (not all)  
> Staff newsletter is very 'PR'                                                                                                              |
| Do you receive enough to do your role?                                 | YES        | YES  
> Enough to do role but would like more - top level stuff.  
> Level of secrecy with senior management.                                                                                                     |
|                                                                        | YES        | YES  
> Due to length of service - know who to contact for more info  
"Sometimes it is as much about who you know as what's coming out from the university to do job more effectively but it doesn't hinder my day-to-day work. |
|                                                                        | YES        | YES  
> Would like to have greater awareness about other roles/services in the university to do job more effectively but it doesn't hinder my day-to-day work. |
|                                                                        | YES        | YES  
> there are probably things that I don't know I don't know about.  
> Would like to know more about some things.  
> Only been at the
| **Is there anything else you would like to receive?** | > Fun stuff - social type things about staff. | > More genuine information – vice chancellors speeches twisted information to make it sound positive when know that’s not the case.  
> Little in the way of updates on corporate decisions/policies. | > More information about senior team/university direction (politics).  
> Can have information overload.  
> Have most of what need. | > No but would like to would like to hear more about what is going on within the university - if understand better what people do then can do job better. | > Nothing specifically. |
| **How do you prefer to receive information?** | > Email - can quickly scan, read and delete. | > Face-to-face so can ask questions.  
> Not always practical but would be good for people to talk. | > Variety of ways.  
> Emails but not too many. | > Email. | "I think we’re a very fussy generation now and it depends on the communication as to
**Do you pass on corporate information to your team?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Not to team normally - role as PA so privy to senior manager information which need to disseminate across school - usually this is academic info. Pass onto registrars to pass onto lecturers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Forward emails</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Everyone receives the same emails so I don't pass these on.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Tricky to know what can share and what can't share (confidential information).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Need more checks and balances to ensure that correct information is circulated.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Senior management meetings with direct reports (monthly), one-to-one meetings with rest of team (monthly).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Email - particularly</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

> Staff planning conference - not everyone can go and agenda not relevant.

> "how I want to find out about it"
| Do you carry out checks to see if the information is passed on further (if appropriate)? | No. "As far as I'm concerned, I've done my job... It's up to them if they pass it on" | N/A | N/A - they are lecturers so they deal with students rather than other staff. | N/A |

> Only time speak to whole office is at away days.
> Communication to my wider team is not great, particularly as over split sites - can go a long period without speaking to people directly.

> I go to team meetings of each team once a quarter - can see what information is being passed on - although my presence probably stifles the debate.
> Need to find the right channels for
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think you get enough support in terms of IC to communicate effectively with your team?</td>
<td>&quot;it's fairly straightforward&quot;</td>
<td>Need more help with HR stuff</td>
<td>Often email discussions</td>
<td>Fine with staff I manage directly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything else that we could provide in terms of IC support?</td>
<td>Lower middle manager training, Help with informal communication between teams, Too much hierarchy (can't just speak to someone but have to go through PA etc) - means messages lost in translation</td>
<td>Platform for communication, Internal social media?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Wider team - thought of a weekly newsletter but not sure who I would want to put this together, Would like more awareness of what each team is doing on a regular basis - although this isn't necessarily a marketing thing, Not the tools but Updates on projects/programme boards - this could inform your planning/work etc, Less 'PR' news which can feel false</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you aware of the university’s strategic goals?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Aware and can access them if needed.</td>
<td>&gt; Need update - where at regarding plan.</td>
<td>&gt; Aware of the relevant ones.</td>
<td>&gt; The ones relevant to me.</td>
<td>&gt; Around my strategic area only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; You get a negative view if don’t have regular updates on progress.</td>
<td>&gt; School plan is more relevant.</td>
<td>&gt; Could be better communicated.</td>
<td>&gt; Not aware of broader ones but do I need to know them?</td>
<td>&gt; Know where to access strategy online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you consider the strategic goals in your daily work?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I work with the dean who drives all work towards them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They act as a driver to get things done if have obstructions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know the strategy well enough.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main role is to do the best for students / support colleagues to do their best.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - the relevant ones to my role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m quite strategic due to my role in marketing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably yes (not daily) but aware of them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This may be due to my role - more strategic role.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How could we improve IC?</th>
<th>It is good but this might be because of position – I get to see emails and information at high level.</th>
<th>More verbal communications.</th>
<th>Already got a lot of information - newsletters, emails, vice chancellor talks.</th>
<th>Would like people to use the communications channels we already have more.</th>
<th>More good news shared - generally news that is communicated is bad.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; More presentations. &gt; Digestible strategic reports. &gt; Progress updates on key areas.</td>
<td>&gt; &quot;Networking is my way of finding out what is going on&quot; &gt; Staff planning conference - opportunity for exchange of ideas.</td>
<td>&gt; Would like people to use the communications channels we already have more.</td>
<td>&gt; Don’t need to introduce new things - just get more people using the current ones.</td>
<td>&gt; Raise awareness of events etc - so many that difficult to stay on top of things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Do you feel like you've got opportunities to feedback to senior management?</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO</strong></td>
<td><strong>YES</strong></td>
<td><strong>YES</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO</strong></td>
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<td>&gt; You're seen as a trouble maker if you do.</td>
<td>&gt; It's mainly top-down.</td>
<td>&gt; Yes - director is very approachable and allows for feedback which he takes to senior management meetings.</td>
<td>&gt; Yes I do but that's where my department scored lowest in staff survey.</td>
<td>&gt; I try to feedback particularly if a project/idea has big flaws but not listened to.</td>
<td>&gt; Have managed to change one thing so perhaps some chance to feedback.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Would you like to</strong></th>
<th><strong>YES</strong></th>
<th><strong>YES</strong></th>
<th><strong>YES</strong></th>
<th><strong>YES</strong></th>
<th><strong>YES</strong></th>
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> informal communication (rooms for sale etc).

> More social meetings, more visible leaders

"Sometimes you just need to bring people together"
| feedback? | How can we improve feedback opportunities? | > Discussion before policies are imposed.  
> Currently there is no room before or after policies are implemented for discussion. | > Surveys.  
> Transparency. | > Could be informal - senior team walking the floor and finding out what is going on.  
> If adopt more formal approach then becomes more political. | > More frequent staff survey (currently on a 4-year cycle?)  
> Need results to be made public.  
> Focus groups for ideas.  
> Expand project groups and invite more junior staff to take part  
"I think people have really good ideas which are not necessarily about their own school or service" | > Need tools to allow people to put their ideas forward / be creative.  
> More open project boards and awareness of what they do.  
> Clarity over how the systems work e.g. submitting funding bids. | > Lots of things go on and staff can feel on the periphery of it - would like staff to be more connected with what is going on.  
> Would like more collaboration - “it’s very easy to give feedback... and believe someone else is responsible for making the change” - more partnership.  
> Need a process where if people have a good reason why... |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you ever get feedback from your team and send it back up the chain?</td>
<td>&gt; Yes. School away days when come up with ideas and plans, regardless of level</td>
<td>&gt; Tend to do things and then if they get picked up - great, rather than suggesting things up the chain</td>
<td>&gt; Supposed to happen during meetings but depends on personality of LM - are they approachable? If not then unlikely to happen.</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Yes a bit from my team although they might not realise that. &gt; Don’t ever see senior managers in our offices - they’re not aware of what goes on here.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How do you normally communicate with your direct reports?</td>
<td>&gt; Face-to-face. &gt; Not formal meetings - just chat. &gt; Formal is yearly SDR process (appraisal). &gt; If something has</td>
<td>&gt; Face-to-face (sit together). &gt; Email. &gt; Meetings.</td>
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something shouldn't be done - it shouldn't be ignored.
happened that team are not happy with, then will have a meeting.

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<tr>
<td>&gt; Dean has lots of targets from senior management - don't necessarily understand lower grades and their roles/interests etc.</td>
<td>&gt; LM works part-time, little contact and difficult because not there to receive or give information.</td>
<td>&gt; She makes decisions without consulting me.</td>
<td>&gt; She micro manages everything.</td>
<td>&gt; Communication is very important when managing numerous people.</td>
<td>&gt; People's management skills should be adapted to the people they're line managing - I don't think my line manager does this.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Motivated by manager</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>YES</th>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Not especially motivated.</td>
<td>&gt; Self-motivated - making most out of situation.</td>
<td>&gt; Yes and no - we have same goals but her expectations are not realistic (in</td>
<td>&gt; No, not by my line manager.</td>
<td>&gt; Motivated by my line manager's line</td>
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<td>&gt; Yes - he leads by example. He's motivated, gets things done, has a</td>
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<td>Methods for receiving information from manager</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<td>&gt; Informally - updates required for job.</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; N/A</td>
<td>&gt; Meetings.</td>
<td>&gt; Email.</td>
<td>&gt; Yes - verbally as sit next to each other or via email.</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; I get to see</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Would never forward email or pass on information.</td>
<td>&gt; Face-to-face.</td>
<td>&gt; If something important, he will invite a senior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Receive corporate information from manager</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; She is fine when she's here but not frequent enough.</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Her view.</td>
<td>&gt; He passes things on from senior management meetings on a regular basis.</td>
<td>&gt; Usually already know the same information from meetings and are just discussing it in one-to-one.</td>
<td>&gt; Copied into emails</td>
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<td>&gt; Rarely hear information first-hand from manager but sometimes happens.</td>
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</table>

clear vision, made lots of changes, explains decisions, listens to ideas and takes them forward.
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<tr>
<th>Does your manager interpret information for you?</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>YES</th>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Biased to his world view.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES - her view.</td>
<td></td>
<td>YES sometimes.</td>
<td>&quot;We're on a need to know basis&quot;</td>
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<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<td>&gt; He tries to keep us up-to-date with most things.</td>
<td>I'm sure he gets a lot more but he does try to keep it as relevant as possible&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>What does your manager do well in terms of communicating with you?</td>
<td>Nothing – I get information from other sources and then ask him about it.</td>
<td>One-to-one chats occasionally when she's here but not often enough to be of benefit.</td>
<td>Supports us to get involved in committees.</td>
<td>Communicates well.</td>
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| How would you sum up xxx as a place to work? | "I used to feel like it was a really homely place to work and I used to feel really motivated... I felt like we were all working together as a team... Whereas now, I feel like we're a bit used" | Nothing to compare against as first job. | Stayed a long time - good sign? | Leadership was better before - direct communications from VC - made you feel like you had a vision to work towards. | I've worked here a long time. | Satisfaction in my role – it has suited me. | "red tape" | It differs a lot from service to service and school to school. If all I had to do was deal with my own service then I would be extremely lucky and I would enjoy my work" | No accountability across the university. | Good place to work - slightly stagnant - same workforce for years - could be seen as a good thing or could be bad as they can obstruct change. | Broadly a positive place to work. | Frustrating - I can see the wealth of potential here and it just needs good leaders to achieve the success and use the potential. | It's too big – the university tries to be too many things at once. | Lack of common
| **Is there anything else to add?** | 
|----------------------------------|---|
| - Lack of transparency around voluntary redundancies and added stress on those left behind. | - The university is quite a negative place.  
- I love working in my service and I think I'm extremely lucky to work in my service, it's just when I go outside into the broader university that issues emerge. |
| - I would like more senior support for things - to do things on campus and support each other more.  
- "There's a lack of community, a lack of genuine pride in working here that I sense sometimes and a bit of self interest at senior levels (VC earns £250k) "it stinks a little bit at the top" | - Informal, working together on issues = more effective than formal structures of training.  
- Encourage more informal networking. |
think needs to come from the top down. I think if you got that sorted... it would go a long way to making this a better place to work"