

From [KAFF Systems](#)

## **There's More to Communication than Meets the Ear**

You hear it again and again and you know it's true. We see it every day and we know it's true. The biggest cause of workplace problems is poor (or even lack of) communication. To improve productivity, quality, employee commitment and morale, it must be improved. But, before you begin to improve workplace communication and reap the benefits of your efforts, you should have a clear understanding of just what constitutes communication. It's more than meets the ear ... it's more than just talk. In this commentary, we'll say a few words about the most common notion of communication ... talk. Then we'll offer a few words about a less obvious but clearly important form of communication. In future commentaries, we'll talk about other less obvious but equally important forms of communication.

**Talk.** Problems don't usually arise with communication of instructions or technical information between supervisors and employees or between co-workers ... we find that kind of communication consistently good. It's communication of "the state of the business" ... "Are we going to get the new contract from Bi-Metal Bar?" ... "Are we going to be hiring more full-time claims processors or do we have to continue to get by with those temps?" ... "I heard some talk about China; are we going to outsource the grinding work?" Improving this kind of workplace communication will give employees a sense of involvement in the business. "Your" business can become "their" business; raising participation, commitment and morale. Yes, sometimes there's a fine line between information you can make public and information you can't, but a consistent effort to bring employees intellectually into the organization will pay bottom line dividends.

**Employee Handbook.** Yes, your Handbook is a form of communication. If you don't have one or if you have an outdated one or if you have one "just to have one," you're missing the chance to clearly tell all employees what they can expect from you and what you expect from them. You're missing the chance to provide them with a first resource for answering their questions and addressing their issues; to give them a glimpse of your more detailed policies and procedures; to clearly set forth your ground rules; to establish channels for two-way communication. Telling employees "I have an open door policy", for example, is simply taken more seriously if employees have seen it in the Handbook and know you're committed to it. So, do *you* say you have an open door policy? Have *you* reviewed your Handbook for language supporting your claim of an open door policy?

Your Handbook is a key avenue for two-way workplace communication. Have you thoroughly reviewed recently? Is your Handbook language effective; that is, are you communicating effectively through it and are employees communicating effectively through its designated channels? It makes good business sense to build a Handbook that returns positive results. We'll be happy to tell you more about Handbooks, how to improve your workplace communication and how to capture some of those positive results.

**Next Time.** Policies and Procedures.