

Does your megaphone work both ways?



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How would your team describe the flow of communication in your organization? Do you deliver news to team members all at once or one by one? Can you talk to your superior's superiors without fear?

Top-down communication comes naturally for most organizations. But developing a culture with healthy channels in other directions can make a big difference when it comes to your team feeling heard.

It may help to offer multiple ways for employees to submit feedback. Ideally, these include a mix among these types:

Formal. Most companies already have formal channels in place. These could include quality reviews, production reports and performance evaluations.

Informal. This kind of feedback is everywhere if you just listen. You can gather it by:

- Talking to employees
- Taking questions and comments at meetings
- Reading feedback that comes through e-mail or other electronic media

Peer to peer. Try a new way to generate ideas: Have your team members work together — without a manager at the table — to discuss ideas they'd like to develop. This kind of communication connects coworkers. It also enables them to take the initiative to solve issues they have in common.

Anonymous. The most candid feedback is likely to come from comments submitted without names attached. For example, a suggestion box or online survey can reveal a lot about your team's strengths and pain points. Without the worry of repercussions, anonymous suggestions often include information you won't see anywhere else.

Got feedback? Now what?

Collecting feedback isn't enough. You have to use it to make improvements. If people see their comments leading nowhere, they may not take the time to share their thoughts in the future. Be transparent about the ways their ideas influence changes. That can encourage more sharing and innovation.

Have you identified any new channels you'd like to create in your organization? Give it a try and see what positive changes you and your team can make happen.