

Principles of Effective Security Awareness (SA) Communication

A SA Communication Plan is based on the following key principles of effective organizational communication:

- **SA Communication is a management process** with a specific business purpose and disciplined methods of development, implementation, and measurements. It is accomplished through a strategic communication plan reviewed and approved by senior management.
- **SA Communication is a change agent**. Its purpose is not just to convey information, but to change behavior. It changes behavior by persuading people to take action toward the organization's objectives.
- **The primary responsibility for SA communication lies with all managers and supervisors**. The SA Communication Unit is responsible for designing and delivering the system and tools that enable managers to play their role as communicators. Face to face communication with the immediate manager is the most effective form of communication, and is the way employees prefer to receive information.
- **SA Communication is a two way process**. Listening and encouragement of feedback must be as emphasized and practiced as speaking and providing information and directions. Two-way is the only way for communication to actually exist in the organization.
- **To be effective, SA communication must be grounded in the interests and language of the receiver**. While it seeks to achieve the organization's strategic objectives, it cannot do so effectively unless it uses a receiver-focused approach in both content and context.
- **To be noticed, SA communication must be compelling**. As it must compete for the receiver's attention, communication must use highly compelling and creative ways to deliver its message.
- **To be influential, SA communication must be credible**. Without a high degree of credibility, the integrity and believability of the message will be lost, and the whole communication process will be a waste of resources.
- **To be remembered and internalized, SA communication needs to be continuous and consistent**. We can not afford not to communicate

Executives' Roles and Benefits:

Roles: The organization's executives have several key roles to play in the organizational communication process:

- They review, give input to, and approve the Communication Plan, including the strategic communication objectives to be achieved.
- They articulate the organization's strategy, business plan, interests, and actions in a variety of communication opportunities and media, including town meetings, department meetings, speeches, presentations, memos, and interpersonal interactions with stake-holders.
- They create and welcome opportunities for them to listen to the ideas, feedback, and issues raised by stakeholders.
- They act as role – models for the essence of the messages conveyed by the communication process, to enforce the vital credibility aspect of organizational communication.

Benefits: The organization's top leadership will gain the following benefits from the implementation of the SA Communication Plan:

- Organizational communication will enable top management to explain their business strategy and goals to the stake-holders, helping gain their support and alignment.
- Communication uncovers hot issues and concerns on the minds of key stake-holders, making it possible to address these issues in timely manner to maintain good relationships with critical constituencies, including customers, investors, employees and the community.
- Explaining the reasons behind certain executive actions and changes helps gain employee understanding and support for these actions.
- Effective, open, and credible communication creates a culture of trust, shared values, and accessible knowledge throughout the organization. This facilitates faster action and higher performance.

Managers / Supervisors' Roles and Benefits:

Roles: Employee surveys have shown that people want to get the important information affecting the organization and their jobs from their immediate supervisor. This means that managers and supervisors must fulfill this expectation by acting as the primary communicators of business strategy and actions for their direct reports. Managers and supervisors need to support the Communication Plan and its messages, own it as their own plan, and be prepared to explain it and answer staff questions about it.

To do this effectively, they need to work closely with the Communication Department, including attending meetings or training for this purpose. Ultimately, the managers and supervisors are accountable for the two-way communication process within their areas.

Benefits: Managers and supervisors gain the following benefits from the organizational communication process and plan:

- They become better able to answer questions from their own staff about company business and actions, enhancing their status in the process.
- Managers and supervisors will build better relationships with their staff by practicing open two-way communication, including raising the issues voiced by their staff to upper management.
- Armed with the critical information about company strategy and goals, managers and their staff will be better able to contribute effectively to achieving these goals, enhancing their own value to the organization.

Employees' Roles and Benefits:

Roles:

Employees have an important role to play as well in implementing an effective SA communication plan. As supervisors are the primary communicators for their staff, front-line employees are the primary communicators for the customers. In fact, to the customer, the front-line employee is the organization. Therefore, employees need to be able to communicate certain messages to the customers they serve which are consistent with the organization's strategy. Employees have opportunities to position the organization's efforts regarding

security and privacy as a competitive edge. They also need to work, contribute and achieve in ways that produce results consistent with the organization's goals.

Here's an example: For those that work in a Call Center and take Credit Card Information from a caller in order to process an order, it is prudent to not write any Credit Card number down. It is better to request that the customer repeat the number. If the customer states that they had already provided the information, it is a wonderful opportunity to simply state, "Yes, however, in order to protect our customers privacy, we never write those numbers down. May I have it again, please." That's a very subtle message to let the customer know that your organization does not just pay lip service to their privacy. It indicates that you've put words into action!

In addition, employees play the important role of ambassadors of their organization for the public. Anywhere they go, they might be asked where they work, and they will be able to communicate positively about their organization's security and privacy, enhancing its reputation and ability to attract customers and employees.

Benefits:

By having a full understanding of what the organization is all about, its mission and vision, its strategy and its goals, especially in regards to security and privacy, employees can shape and redirect their work efforts, their ideas for improvement, and their energies toward actions that help the organization succeed. This can reflect better on their own opportunities for advancement within the organization. It also equips the person with better knowledge about the business in a way that benefits the professional development of the person and ability to gain more responsible positions whether inside or outside the organization.

In addition, having the big business picture in sight, employees will be better able to see the value of their work, and gain an understanding and appreciation for how they contribute to organizational success. This provides stronger personal and professional satisfaction for the working individual and teams.