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A President

## Communication Breakdown:

*How a Lack of Communication  
in Your Business Breeds Disorganization*

By Angela A. Aldrich

**T**HE REALITY of most businesses today is that more employees *must* multi-task. Many people work independently while others must work in groups and share project responsibilities. I find that in every office there are at least two communication problems: Duplication and Desertion. How many times have you held off from doing a task because you automatically assumed someone else was doing it? How many times have you worked vigorously to complete an assignment when you realized, after the fact, that five other people were working just as vigorously on the *same* project? Some assignments are frequently duplicated while other duties are completely deserted. Do we ever wonder why this happens? It's simple: a lack of communication. Another contributor to these mishaps is a lack of

understanding one's role in their work environment. In the big picture, if important work is ignored, it causes chaos and things become a mess! But it's not always a paper mess that ensues; it's the situational conflicts such as ineffective multi-tasking that can cause overall disruption of an office.

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down to the hourly employee.”*

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When a shared work environment does not operate properly, it costs the company time, employee productivity, and ultimately profit. When profit is lost it affects everyone in a business from the top executive down to the hourly employee. Due to frequent profit losses, expenditures can rise because the cost of either fixing an existing problem or the duplication of efforts. The solution is found when



*Continued on page 2*

### YOUR BUSINESS MIGHT NEED A3 IF.....

- Your store room looks like a volcanic science project.
- You have seven hundred boxes of staples, and you're out of paper clips.

### YOUR HOME MIGHT NEED A3 IF.....

- The first two places you look for your car keys is in the bathroom and the freezer.
- It takes you 40 minutes to get ready to leave the house for 5 minutes.

## GUEST SPOTLIGHT

### Do Your Graphics Make an Impact?

by Meg Ream of Meg Ream Design, Inc.

**I**magine the FLASH of a camera going off in front of you. That instant, attention-grabbing moment is the very SAME impact that your printed and web media should have on your potential customers to make a positive, lasting impression.

**W**hen someone looks at your logo, brochures, newsletters, web site, etc., they should feel that same "Wow!" and associate it with your business. When you send out marketing tools that are an asset and not a liability to your overall market appeal, the difference is shown in your bottom line. So ask yourself, "Do my materials flop ... or FLASH !?"

## Communication Breakdown *(continued from page 1)*

there is a clear, streamlined channel of communication, and everyone understands what their goals are. When people do not know what they are supposed to be doing, it can become a stressful environment. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention states unequivocally that 80% of our medical expenditures are stress-related (*Fast Company Magazine*, 2/03 pg. 88). This illustrates a snowball effect. People don't effectively communicate, therefore they don't do the work required of them, they then become stressed and sick, and miss work. The result? A huge gap in productivity and continued loss of profit.

But there is hope! There are many simple, effective ways to streamline the workflow in your office. As a business owner or upper level executive, you need to have a clear, direct, and frequent exchange of ideas with your management staff. You must have weekly, or at least monthly, meetings with your management team so they can be clear on what is expected of them and the employees they oversee. Managers need to have the opportunity to ask questions and set goals for themselves and their subordinates. Each manager

has to understand the responsibilities of each staff member they oversee so they can assess productivity and troubleshoot quickly. Executives need to make it clear what is expected of each manager or department head. If your management staff is not clear on what is expected, you will have disorganization and chaos all the way down the chain of command!

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Keeping the lines of communication “free of clutter” is a good place to start.

Once your management staff is fully compliant, they need to meet and address the employees they oversee. Each tier of a company or department needs to have an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses each employee possesses. Your best managers utilize each

individual's strengths and downplay their weaknesses by distributing tasks that showcase where the employee is comfortable and competent. In doing this you can create a well-oiled machine which contributes an effective group of components resulting in a project that is completed in a productive manner. It also reinforces pride in one's work when they can own it and excel at the tasks at hand.

Managers should also focus on encouraging employees to work on their weak spots by using positive reinforcement and incentives. When a person enjoys their work, they have sense of pride in it. They want to be successful. As a manager, you can facilitate success or failure based on how and when you communicate with your co-workers.

When you fail to communicate, you fail to ask questions and troubleshoot. When you fail to communicate vital information can be lost, and in some industries, it can take thousands of dollars to recreate or compensate for that loss.

A good information pipeline results in increased productivity—and profit!

So as profits communicate your market strength, you're stating your ***competitive edge loud and clear.*** ■

## A<sup>3</sup> TIP OF THE MONTH

**R**eplace your ongoing “to do” list by entering each item on your calendar. Select a day and amount of time you will actually need to complete the task. Your calendar serves as a visual reminder and avoids conflict in your schedule with other tasks.

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