

Employees Want More Authentic Communications From Their Leaders

Timothy J. McClimon Contributor 

I write about the intersection of grassroots movements & philanthropy.

Follow



Sep 25, 2023, 08:00am EDT



According to a recent nationwide study conducted by GE and Ipsos, a global polling firm, 95 percent of C-suite executives and 81 percent of entry-level employees believe that it is important that a leadership mindset be effectively communicated to all staff members, and over 80 percent of entry-level employees identify leadership training as a meaningful benefit. However, C-suite leaders and entry-level employees disagree about how successful companies are in the development of strong leaders, and how effective leaders are in communicating this leadership mindset.

For the purposes of this survey, a “leadership mindset” was defined as the characteristics companies foster among employees to develop strong leaders who can help achieve business objectives and ensure the long-term success of their company.

Based on responses from 253 C-suite leaders and 411 entry-level employees across the United States, the study — *From the Ground Floor to the Corner Office: Exploring the Leadership Mindset* — identified quality, reliability, integrity, and innovation as the top characteristics of a successful company and qualities such as trustworthiness, intelligence, and vision among the top characteristics of an effective leader.

While almost 90 percent of C-suite leaders said that their executive teams embody these characteristics, only 59 percent of entry-level employees agreed. And when asked whether executives effectively communicate the company's values, 85 percent of top leaders said yes, but only 62 percent of entry-level employees agreed.

This divergence suggests that effective internal communications are critical for companies to highlight their values and promote a leadership mindset among their entire staff. More effective internal communications can result in employees believing that their companies are on the right track and this study shows that they are then more than twice as likely to be external “promoters” for their businesses.

“The workplace revolution is reshaping how employees develop as leaders, just as it has reinvented where they work and how they work,” said Linda Boff, GE's Chief Marketing Officer and President of the GE Foundation. “In today's rapidly changing business environment, entry-level employees value a clear vision and authentic communications from the C-suite, creating an opportunity to further inspire and empower the next generation of leaders.”

In another recent study, Axios HQ found that leaders and employees are not always on the same page when it comes to the company's business goals and objectives (66 percent of leaders think they are aligned with employees but only 44 percent of employees agreed).

This Axios HQ study, *The 2023 State of Essential Workplace Communications*, surveyed 1,038 full-time employees and 540 top leaders earlier this year. Besides the disconnect mentioned above, the study also found that 77 percent of leaders think their communications share the context that employees need to do their jobs well, but only 46 percent of employees agreed. Citing the importance of employees understanding the goals and directives that they need to do their jobs effectively; 70 percent of leaders think that employees have ready access to this information while only 46 percent of employees say they do.

Business leaders say that the top challenge they face in sharing communications is understanding what's actually important to employees and stakeholders, and 47 percent say the toughest step in keeping the organization aligned is writing in a concise, engaging way people will actually read, rather than overlook in the daily flood of information they receive.

Similarly, the method of communication can dictate whether an employee actually pays attention or not. According to this study, employees prefer ad hoc email messages, meetings, recurring newsletters, and the intranet in that order. Other ways that employees access essential communications – text, video messages, chat tools and podcasts – fell lower on the preference scale.

The key improvements that employees want to see from their leaders are:

- More thoughtful and insightful details
- Hearing from their leaders more often
- Receiving updates on a more consistent cadence

“One of the things we need to do is keep connecting people to the big picture and how they fit into it,” said Jodi Kawada Page, Uber’s Chief of Staff to the Chief Learning Officer. “It’s the impact their job has on a product or user. Help people connect the dots.”