Internal Communication at CSU – What’s good and what can be improved?

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For Communication (COM218) students
14th October 2008
Session Outline

• Why is internal communication important?
• How do we communicate within CSU?
• What are some of the issues with internal communication at CSU?
• How can we improve internal communication?
Why is internal communication important?

- Why is it?

- Staff Climate Survey 2006:
  - Poor rating (31%) for communication and cooperation
A university is a complex place

people, systems, locations, regulations, assets, events, processes, …
Why is internal communication important?

Strategic direction and achievement of organisational goals

*Effective internal communication is crucial for successful organisations as it affects the ability of strategic managers to engage employees and achieve objectives* (Welch and Jackson 2007)
Why is internal communication important?

Staff satisfaction and engagement

• contributing to internal relationships characterised by employee commitment;

• promoting a positive sense of belonging in employees;

• developing their awareness of environmental change; and

• developing their understanding of the need for the organisation to evolve its aims

• in response to, or in anticipation of, environmental change. (Welch & Jackson 2007)
UNIVERSITY STRATEGY

VISION
A national university for excellence in education for the professions, strategic and applied research and flexible delivery of learning and teaching

VALUES
Charles Sturt University values:
- Intellectual independence and freedom of inquiry
- The discovery, refinement, preservation and dissemination of knowledge
- Engagement with professions and communities through responsiveness, partnerships and inducements
- Social justice including ethical practice and global citizenship
- Economic, social and environmental sustainability, including the responsible stewardship of resources, and
- Its staff and students, their well-being and development

MISSION
As a national university, Charles Sturt University's mission is to:
- Conduct systemic and applied research which is nationally and internationally recognised
- To lead in the quality provision of flexible learning and teaching, and
- To enhance its communities, which include:
  - Rural and regional Australia
  - Indigenous Australians
  - The professions, industries and students for whom we provide research and education, and
  - National and international institutions, scholars and researchers with whom our staff and students are linked

KEY OBJECTIVES
As an innovative national leader in Australia, Charles Sturt University will:
- Provide distinctive educational programs for the professions that prepare students for work and citizenship and which:
  - Are recognised by and developed in collaboration with the professions, particularly through practicum placement
  - Are accessible to students who have the capacity for university study
  - Foster ethical practice
  - Promote international understanding including opportunities for international exchange, and
  - Maintain high levels of satisfaction among graduates, employers and the University’s communities
- Conduct strategic and applied research of an international standard which:
  - Creates new knowledge
  - Is applied for the benefit of our communities
  - Is responsive to emerging opportunities and challenges
  - Enhances collaboration with industry
  - Develops partnerships with professions, communities and other researchers
  - Facilitates opportunities for linkages with learning and teaching, and
  - Focuses on agricultural sustainability, applied philosophy and public ethics
- Continues to lead in the quality provision of flexible learning and teaching which:
  - Is supported by well-researched curriculum and teaching methodologies
  - Uses research and technology to be flexible and responsive to student needs and feedback
  - Provides shared learning spaces and teaching experiences for students on campus and online
  - Builds communities of learning especially amongst diverse students
- Continues to build institutional strength, reputation and sustainability by:
  - Adhering to the concept of "One University"
  - Creating a culture that is responsive to organisational change and renewal
  - Aligning institutional values, planning and performance through commitment to quality and continual improvement
  - Ensuring ethical and effective governance practices and the responsible stewardship of resources
  - Forming collaborative networks and alliances with other institutions, and
  - Attracting, retaining and developing committed, high quality staff and empowering them within a positive work environment
Why is internal communication important?

• Effective change management

• Transparency and effectiveness of decision making

• And why is it particularly important for CSU? – your experience as a student!
Who are the stakeholders?

- all employees;
- strategic management: the dominant coalition, top management or strategic managers (CEOs, senior management teams);
- day-to-day management: supervisors, middle managers or line-managers (directors, heads of departments, team leaders, division leaders, the CEO as line manager);
- work teams (departments, divisions); and
- project teams (internal communication review group, company-wide e-mail implementation group).
How do we communicate at CSU?

Staff Focus Groups & Phone Interviews (2007 & 2008):

Methodology is important! (Bloor et al 2001)

- Ethics approval – confidentiality
Focus Group Method (cont)

• Expressions of Interest

• Information Flyer with Consent form

• 12-15 in the group

• Taped conversations transcribed
Focus Group Method (cont)

Experienced facilitator: Certified Professional Facilitator (International Association of Facilitators) working under a code of ethics:

We strive to engender an environment of respect and safety where all participants trust that they can speak freely and where individual boundaries are honoured. We use our skills, knowledge, tools, and wisdom to elicit and honour the perspectives of all
Focus Group Method (cont)

Ground Rule or Working Assumptions

• Everyone has wisdom
• We need everyone’s wisdom for the wisest result
• There are no wrong answers
• The whole is greater than the sum of the parts
• Everyone will hear others and be heard
  (Institute of Cultural Affairs)
• What’s said in the room stays in the room (CSU Focus groups 2007)
Focus Group Method (Cont)

- Different campuses - Bathurst, Wagga, Albury, Thurgoona, Dubbo, Ontario, Orange, Goulburn with a mix of staff

- Schools separately in 2008 – academic staff

- A cuppa & relax between sessions – organisational culture second half
Conducting Focus Groups (cont)

Facilitated discussion with focus questions:

• *How and from where do you obtain your information at CSU?*

• *What information do you use to make decisions?*

• *How could…how has information been improved at CSU over past 12 months?*
As a Student Where do you find your information?
Where do staff get their information, what’s good?

• Vice-Chancellor’s roadshows
  roadlistens in 2008!

• Interact – 2008 all focus groups indicated Interact had improved communication
Communicate
Collaborate
Discover
Learn

INTERact NOW

interact.csu.edu.au
Where do staff get their information, what’s good?

- What’s New – needed improvement ⇒ re-run notice identified & categories

- CSU News
visit
my.csu

You should check your eBox regularly at
my.csu.edu.au

Service Desk: 1300 653 088  Internal: 84357
Web Form: http://csu.edu.au/sdesk
CSU leads national early childhood project
08 Oct 2008
CSU has welcomed the announcement that the University will lead a national initiative to develop the Early Years Learning Framework as part of the Federal Government’s agenda for early childhood education.
Where do staff get their information, what's good?

- *yourCSU* (Dec 2007)
  

  - Great for Induction as shows:
    - CSU’s organisational structure
    - Our processes
    - Key people to contact
Student Lifecycle

Teaching Lifecycle (Principal Dates)

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HECS Census Date

Employee Lifecycle

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Where do staff get their information, what’s good/improved?

• Informal and formal communication with senior managers and direct managers and supervisors is valued and has improved.
  – Whereas Gray (2008) cited that immediate supervisor or manager was not as important, staff want to hear from senior people (IABC Handbook)
Where do staff get their information, what’s going wrong?

• Emails: most important source - overwhelmed by volume & downward flow
  – email best practice guidelines developed

• Telephone: being replaced by email!!!
Where do staff get their information, what’s going wrong?

• CSU Communications Directory, search engines

• “Divisionalisation” or communication silos is an ongoing issue
Complexity, Silos in Communication

• How do we address these issues?

• What are the barriers at CSU that make these issues more difficult to solve?
Complexity, Silos in Communication: Solutions

• What’s working? What are we doing?

  – State of the art videoconferencing with Bridgit, Smart Boards; Interact

  – VCs and other senior managers road ‘listens’; Interdivisional meetings
Complexity, Silos in Communication: Solutions

• What’s working? What are we doing?
  – Change Management Framework with communication plans for major changes
  – Leadership and Professional Development
  – Work Process Improvement
NEXT STEPS

• What are our next steps?

References and Further reading


Gray, Rodney, July 2008 lecture to residential school, School of Communication
