

# Communication

## Bulletin <sup>TM</sup> for Managers & Supervisors

A fast-read source of information to help managers communicate better within and between departments, twice a month.

July 1, 2022



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## Why leaders need to focus on fixing culture – and how to do it

### Toxic cultures cause turnover, health and financial issues

This might be a bitter pill to swallow: If you have turnover, you have culture issues.

Still, many leaders point blame for the Great Resignation on employees' desires for higher pay and flexible schedules.

But MIT Sloan researchers found turnover is almost always rooted in culture issues – even before the pandemic.

### The cost of a toxic culture

The fallout from a toxic culture – which can stem from just one team, a whole department or across an entire organization – are staggering. Employees who work in a negative culture are less effective and productive, and more inclined to health issues and absenteeism. Plus, toxic

cultures are breeding grounds for incivility, injustice and harassment.

As you might imagine, that all adds up to major costs associated with turnover, health care and potential lawsuits.

Now that you know why you should care about culture, here's what employees identified as the 10 critical factors to the right culture and how researchers suggest leaders can fix it:

### 1. Respect

Employees expect to be treated with dignity and courtesy, and taken seriously.

*Deliver it:* Leaders can set the example,

*Please see Culture ... on Page 2.*

## Sharpen Your Judgment

### Extreme or reasonable measures to prove lies?

"I'll cut to the chase," said Manager Andy Gavin. "Your employment here is terminated effective immediately."

"Whoa," said Lindley Lewis. "You pulled me in your office as I'm just booting up my computer to tell me to get out? The day I come back from leave to take care of my sick son?"

"If you were actually doing that, I might be more sympathetic," Andy said. "But I have evidence you were going to the gym, getting coffee with friends and shopping like it's your job."

"That's not exactly the intermittent FMLA leave you requested – and I graciously granted," he said.

"What the heck?! If you've been tailing me, you weren't exactly doing your job, either," Lindley said.

"You brought this on yourself, taking leave around the weekends and scheduled PTO. We had to investigate," Andy said.

"That's exactly when my son needs the most attention, when I'm about to go back to work," Lindley said.

### Crossed the line

Lindley stood up and said, "I may have taken liberties, but you crossed the line, having someone watch over me. I'll leave now, but you haven't heard the last on this."

The employee sued, claiming the company violated her rights by having her followed when off work. The company fought the case. Did it win?

This regular feature sharpens your thinking and helps keep both you and your firm out of trouble. It describes a real legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.

*Make your decision, then please turn to Page 4 for the court's ruling.*

### The Purpose of Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors

Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors provides relevant and actionable business ideas to help managers and supervisors improve communication and increase effectiveness.

The Bulletin helps improve communication within and between departments, a major goal for most businesses seeking better performance.

All in a fast-read format, twice a month.

## Culture ...

(continued from Page 1)

but you might want to reinforce it by rewarding employees for collegial behaviors between one another.

### 2. Supportive leaders

Employees want leaders who listen, encourage and support their careers.

*Deliver it:* Employees hope leaders will help them do their work. Pitch in when the time comes.

### 3. Core values

Employees need to see their leaders act consistently with company values.

*Deliver it:* Review a core value at each team meeting and give a shout-out to a team member who practiced it.

### 4. Direct managers

Managers' attitudes directly impact employees' quality of work. Negative leaders will poison employees.

*Deliver it:* Check it at the door. Your problems can't spill into staff's work.

### 5. Unethical behavior

Employees don't want to work where bosses or colleagues lack integrity.

*Deliver it:* Don't let business ethical lapses go unnoticed or unpunished.

## TECH CORNER

### How a clean desk can prevent data breaches

Mom often said, "Clean your room!"

Security experts now say, "Clean your desk!"

Human error accounts for almost all data breaches. And the new work environment – where employees carry confidential information from office to home and back again – puts companies at risk for security breaches.

#### 4 tips

Encourage clean desks to help prevent data breaches. Try to:

- **Give guidance.** Create some

### 6. Benefits

It's not a top priority, but employees do consider company benefits in their culture assessment.

*Deliver it:* Survey employees on the benefits they want, and work to deliver.

### 7. Perks

Same goes for perks – employees consider it part of the overall culture.

*Deliver it:* Again, survey and deliver.

### 8. Learning and development

Employees want opportunities to learn formally and informally.

*Deliver it:* Recognize where employees excel and offer them opportunities to improve those skills.

### 9. Job security

Employees want to work in an environment where they don't fear layoffs or automation.

*Deliver it:* Transparency matters. When job security is at risk, talk about it early and often.

### 10. Reorganization

Most employees don't consider constant change an ideal environment.

*Deliver it:* Get employee input before making decisions on change

*Sources:* MIT Sloan Management Review, [tinyurl.com/predictor527](https://tinyurl.com/predictor527) and [tinyurl.com/culturetips527](https://tinyurl.com/culturetips527)

guidelines on what employees should and shouldn't print and keep at their desks. Encourage less printing and more saving in your cloud.

- **Provide a lockable storage space** to secure documents when not in use.
- **Make a backup routine.** With more on desktop, and less on desk, set an automatic backup schedule. Remind employees the day it will happen so they update documents.
- **Add an email reminder.** Add this in signature lines: *Please consider the environment and confidentiality before printing this email.*

*Source:* Shred-it, [tinyurl.com/cleandesk527](https://tinyurl.com/cleandesk527)

## COMMUNICATION BRIEFS

### ■ Prepare and use success statements to gain ground

Success statements can help you (and your employees) gain ground by quickly letting others know your value.

With prepared lines, you can share accomplishments without bragging and prove credibility without being condescending. Here's how to prepare and use a success statement:

1. **Document successes.** Start today if you don't already have a list.
2. **Note who and/or what benefited** from your efforts and success.
3. **Craft the story.** In a few sentences, explain the problem you faced, how you overcame it and the result of the accomplishment.
4. **Know your audience.** When the time comes, what you share will depend on who you need to win over. For instance, if they focus on the bottom line, talk about successes that made money or saved costs. For a workforce-focused audience, recall successes that highlight management skills or team dynamics.

*Source:* SmartBrief on Leadership, [tinyurl.com/statement527](https://tinyurl.com/statement527)

### ■ Most useless question ever: 'How are you doing?'

If you want to connect better with employees and colleagues, skip this question: How are you doing?

It doesn't convey that you actually care, says Jason Lauritsen, a management trainer. Instead:

1. **Ask:** "How are you doing on a scale of one to 10?"
2. **Follow up,** with something like, "A 10, wow! What's working?" or "Only a four? What's going on?"
3. **Shut up.** It's the start of an important conversation.
4. **Offer help.** Say, "What does support from me look like right now?" or "How can I help?"

*Source:* Lauritsen spoke at Workhuman Live 2022 in Atlanta, [workhuman.com/events](https://workhuman.com/events), [jasonlauritsen.com/](https://jasonlauritsen.com/)

# Real Problems, Real Solutions

Our subscribers come from a broad range of organizations, large and small. In this regular networking feature, three of them share their successes in improving workplace communication.

## 1 How we hire, train, promote to improve DEI

Most companies make diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) a high priority – and we're no different. We want a diverse workforce that brings the best of every community to work.

So we set what we would call an important, sensible goal: Build a workforce that represents our customer base. For example, if 20% of our customers are from the LGBTQ+ community, so should our staff.

### 4 pillars

We created a plan to address four pillars of DEI. And we hire, train and promote based on it.

- **People:** Keep employee base representative of customer base.
- **Culture.** Create an environment where everyone is comfortable to be their authentic self.
- **Business.** Include DEI initiatives and checkpoints throughout operations to be sure everyone feels included and part of the organization.
- **World.** Look beyond our business to make sure we are improving the culture where our company has a footprint.

*(Celeste Warren, VP of Diversity & Inclusion, Merck, North Wales, PA, spoke at Workhuman Live 2022)*

## 2 Teams, individuals can help us define 'how'

It's one thing to expect – and tell – people they need or have to work together. It's another to actually see it happen.

When we recently looked closer at the potential reasons teams or individual employees didn't work well together we realized part of the problem was leadership.

We never truly defined *how* people should or can work together effectively.

### Clear definitions

We had people with the right skills in place. It was our job to give everyone a clearer view of their unique role in the group and what their teammates or employees brought to the table.

Once we defined all that, they could leverage strengths of each member without the frustrating overlap and politics that often come up when people don't understand their roles and how they complement each other.

*(Cynthia Horner, Medical Director, Amwell, shared this success on the Eblin Group Blog)*

## 3 'Monthly Reflection' helps team flourish

Oh. My. Gosh! We were moving, growing and changing fast. That is probably the truth for most companies following the early stages of the pandemic. And we struggled to keep everything under control.

To slow down and take a reality check, I started monthly reflection one-on-one meetings with direct reports to check in on everything.

### Cover 3 topics

In the meetings, we reflect on three things:

1. Scaling self – a look at what's been accomplished or initiated
2. Catching progress – a review of what's been done at or above expectations, and
- 3) Developing – a discussion on what's next, which is almost always opportunities to grow, achieve more and make more in the market.

*(Jaleh Rezaei, Co-founder & CEO, Mutiny, San Francisco, shared this success in First Round Review)*



## YOUR LEGAL COACH

### Do televisits equate to continued med treatment?

**Question:** One of our employees who's eligible for Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave has a health condition that he gets continued medical treatments. Will his televisits count as continued FMLA treatment?

**Answer:** Yes, said employment law attorneys Cortlin Bond and Anne Yuengert from Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP.

Typically, the FMLA defined continuing treatment as an "in-person visit to a healthcare provider."

But like most things, the pandemic changed that. Under Department of Labor rules, video conferences can qualify as long as:

- There is an exam, evaluation or treatment performed by a healthcare provider, and
- The visit is performed on video. Phone calls or emails don't count.

**Source:** [tinyurl.com/FMLA527](https://tinyurl.com/FMLA527)

## LIGHTER SIDE

### Never say never – and more 'never' advice

The past two years of work have taught us to never to say never.

But some "nevers" are cautionary tales for work and life. Consider these:

- Never keep up with The Joneses. Drag them down to your level. It's cheaper. – *Quentin Crisp*
- Never answer an anonymous letter. – *Yogi Berra*
- Never slap a man while he's chewing tobacco. – *Will Rogers*
- Never, under any circumstances, take a sleeping pill and a laxative at the same time. – *Dave Barry*
- Never get annoyed if your neighbor plays music at 2 a.m. Call him at 4 a.m. and tell him how much you enjoyed it. – *Peter Darbo*

**Source:** [RD.com](https://RD.com)

COMMUNICATION NEWS

# Employees stressed? Don't do this

Two out of three employees have told their boss they're overworked.

And two out of three supervisors downplayed an employee's concern about being overwhelmed and stressed. That's not supposed to happen!

Most employees in the Inc and Go survey said they're OK doing something extra once in a while. But many say they're overworked one to two times a month. The high pressure has many considering job changes.

### What employees prefer

Managers don't want to overwork employees – and they definitely don't want

## The dangers of digital miscommunication

We communicate digitally more than ever – a minefield for miscommunication.

More than 90% of employees say they've had messages misunderstood and/or misinterpreted at work, according to research from Loom. What's worse, 20% say a miscommunication caused them to get reprimanded, demoted or fired.

### 3 tips

- So what's the solution? Try to:
- **Over-communicate** on sensitive or

to downplay the struggles employees have.

Instead, researchers found employees prefer you:

- **Set clear boundaries for hours.** That's especially important for remote work.
- **Ban work outside of regular hours.** And that includes not sending work-related messages outside of the hours.
- **Give more breaks.** Employees need to disconnect from work regularly throughout their day.
- **Build in time.** Set more realistic timelines for work completion in the event of a delay.

Source: [tinyurl.com/overwork527](http://tinyurl.com/overwork527)

confidential information in digital messages. Clarify your tone by explaining the emotions behind it – “I'm excited,” “I feel frustrated,” “I'm anxious,” etc.

- **Pick up the phone, Zoom or take a walk.** The best way to avoid digital miscommunication is to talk. It's even better face-to-face when you can see and show body language, and
- **Clarify.** If you're confused, ask for clarification so you don't further the miscommunication.

Source: [loom.com/blog/all-articles](http://loom.com/blog/all-articles)

### Quotes

Your present circumstances don't determine where you can go; they merely determine where you start.

– Nido Qubein

Creativity is intelligence having fun.

– Albert Einstein

Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy.

– Thich Nhat Hanh

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## Sharpen Your Judgment – The Decision

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Yes, the company won when an appeals court rejected her claims.

The employee's attorney surprisingly didn't deny that she abused her Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave privileges. She was supposed to use it intermittently to care for her son. She did some “extra” things. But the company had no business surveying what she did outside of work. So it violated her privacy rights, the attorney claimed.

The company's attorney argued it had a right to investigate alleged FMLA violations. It had hired a private investigator and gathered evidence of the infractions and rightfully terminated her employment.

The court agreed with the company, saying “nothing in the FMLA prevents employers from monitoring employees' activities while on FMLA leave to ensure they do not abuse their leave.”

### Explain parameters

Hiring a P.I. isn't ideal in any workplace situation. And this is an extreme case.

What's important is to make sure employees understand the parameters of their FMLA leave. Work with HR when employees request and use leave to ensure everyone is satisfied.

(Based on *VanHook v. Cooper Health System*. Dramatized for effect.)