

Recommendations

After interviewing current employees of Plexus, our class was able to notice opportunities for improvement regarding the current communication system in place. We have explained these opportunities and recommended ways in which employee orientation can be implemented, daily huddles can be improved, as well as growing in open communication, active listening, and better feedback processes.

During an interview with a Plexus employee they mentioned there was not a formal orientation to the company as a new hire. If anything, they had received a short meeting where their boss did not properly introduce them to the job tasks, fellow employees, and company culture. Without this basic company and team knowledge, they had to navigate the adjustment of how they fit into the company alone. To combat this difficult start to working with Plexus as an employee, we recommend developing an employee orientation for new hires. Employee orientation is vital because 'no matter how big or small the organization is, employees are the true determinants of how successful or how incompetent an organization will turn out to be. Therefore, having an adequately trained workforce is vital to ensure that the workplace has the right employees that have been professionally trained and qualified to do their tasks properly' (Halawi & Haydar, 2018, p. 25). We recommend that Plexus put together an orientation which includes the history of the company, the culture the company is trying to cultivate, global aspects of the company, and the importance of maintaining open communication. By knowing the history of the company, the hire can understand where the company has been and which direction they are headed. This will allow hires to know what they are striving for. By understanding the culture of the company and what they are trying to cultivate, new hires will understand the expectations in place between co-workers. Additionally, including global aspects of the

company, these hires will understand that they will be working with people from many different countries throughout their time with the company. Lastly, open communication is key to maintaining a positive work environment, good relationships between employees, and satisfaction.

Included in the global learning of the company, hires will need to know that different countries have different cultures and expectations than the United States. By having Plexus employees better understand the cultures they will be working with and how to communicate with them, they will be more effective in their communication. To enhance Plexus' intercultural interactions employees' intercultural competency must be strengthened. Intercultural competence is 'the ability to interact with people from other cultural backgrounds, which includes three aspects: formation of cultural awareness... awareness of cultural knowledge; developing intercultural interaction skills and the ability to use them effectively in intercultural situations" (Braslauskas, 2021, p.g. 199). Respecting another's culture is important to the survival of a global business and an innate part of understanding the culture is to know of it. Owning the diversity of a company by leadership will only make the company stronger. "Championing diversity as a leadership style also encourages organizational management and their employees to think creatively about alternatives and respond to the new and turbulent environment with flexibility" (Lee et al., 2020, p.g. 2). To implement an intercultural training program, a learning management system can be utilized or a regularly scheduled course managed by the Human Resources department. "A learning management system is an online platform that facilitates "the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting, and delivery of e-learning education courses or training programs" (Macnaughton & Medinsky, 2015, p.g. 2). A learning management system would be easiest to implement since it would take less time away from the Human Resources

department and would make tracking individuals' progress easier. To endorse the program, a competition between departments or teams could be held where the number completed wins a treat or some other company-specific privilege. By understanding the expectations of the different cultures, these hires can respectfully and efficiently communicate with other locations of the company.

Plexus should also consider the continuation of daily huddles as it will allow employees to continue to form bonds and openly communicate with one another about goals or tasks that need to be completed and urgent matters that need to be addressed for the day. A daily huddle is a short meeting that happens every day and takes place in the mornings so that the team or department can be debriefed and informed of the work and goals that need to be accomplished for the work day. In an interview with a Plexus employee it was noted that these daily huddles were often planned and put on employees calendars but would eventually get cancelled one the daily because management wanted one hundred percent employee participation and attendance during these huddles. This is very unrealistic to have one hundred percent attendance and participation because employees may have other meetings or business matters to attend to during this specific time. However, if management could get a good majority of employees to attend and participate in daily huddles it would still be beneficial to have them especially in a COVID-19 world because it gives time for "employees to make stronger connections with one another and oftentimes gives management a chance to check in on their employees' personal lives toward the start of the meeting" (Woroch, 2020). One way Plexus could fix this issue of not having one hundred percent attendance during these huddles is that afterward send a follow-up email about key components, a list of priorities of what needs to be completed for the day, and what is in need of urgent attention as a reminder for employees who did attend the meeting. Sending a

follow-up email for those unable to attend is a great and easy way to get them briefed on the business goals for the day and other urgent matters within the organization. It also provides an easy way to communicate with management if they have any questions about the tasks that need to be completed.

Since Plexus is an organization that utilizes email as their main way of communicating with one another they should consider utilizing keywords in their subject lines such as important, follow-up, no response necessary (NRN for short), action, information and request. These certain keywords should be capitalized in the subject line so that they will catch employees' eyes and will be easily spotted throughout all of the email clutter that is received throughout the work day. Through utilizing these keywords employees will have an organized and clean inbox that can be easily sorted and filtered through looking up these keywords listed above without having the worry or panic feeling of misplacing or deleting an important email ever again.

Open communication is essential to have in a company, especially one as big as Plexus. An open communication environment is 'one in which all members of the organization feel free to share feedback, ideas and even criticism at every level' (Kibe et al. 2014). By promoting open communication in a work environment employees gain the confidence to comfortably speak up to company leadership when an issue arises. Additionally, the risk of misunderstandings about the tasks at hand decreases and the organization can efficiently work toward their goals. A well defined strategy is one that engages employees in the conversation and aligns with the organization's business goals (Kibe et al 2014). The first step to making sure that everyone understands the tasks at hand and goals that are being strived for is the use of active listening.

Active listening is proven to be an effective agent in group development as it establishes trust between two parties and promotes empathy for others (Leading Effectively, 2021). This communication tool improves mutual understanding through principles such as: attention, paraphrasing, and clarifying. Giving the speaker full attention shows that the receiver of the message is listening. By paraphrasing what the speaker has said, as well as asking questions, this will eliminate any misunderstandings and reduce the risk of misinterpretations. Clarity within a conversation is essential in effective workplace communication. An organization consisting of members who excel in listening skills will also excel in the effectiveness of communication and efficiency within the organization. Researcher Lynn Cooper describes listening competency as a skill that is appropriate and effective, meaning the listener understands the content of the interaction, and the interaction goals, needs, desires, or intentions, are met (Cooper, 1997). This can increase productivity because reaching a complete understanding of what needs to get done will allow the task to be completed quickly. When team members are proficient in listening skills, better personal connections can be built, stimulating collaboration between team members. Establishing strong connections and collaboration will increase productivity within the organization and improve facilitated feedback among employees. Incorporating listening education will improve team members' listening skills, increase employees' abilities to form connections with others in the workplace, and decrease the communication breakdowns within the organization. This education could be integrated into the routine training throughout an employee's time with the organization.

The feedback process at Plexus currently runs through the Human Resources (HR) department, allowing employees to request feedback from managers and other team members. Employees have stated that the current feedback process in place is helpful, yet still poses

limitations. Written feedback lacks important aspects of communication such as tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language. In talking with current employees, they mention that a helpful solution would be to incorporate both written and verbal feedback. This could be changed by utilizing the current survey provided by the human resources department and shortening it to only be a few questions. Then, ensure that the survey is given to the inquiring employee in person so that more feedback can be verbally communicated in a face-to-face setting. From past experience, it seems that written feedback is helpful because the inquiring employee can look back at their feedback at any point in the future, while face-to-face communication will allow both employees to be more respectful and helpful to each other.

Additionally, having a company wide seminar about giving and receiving feedback would help employees adjust to the new system and teach them how to handle feedback. Learning how to handle feedback is important because research findings indicate that often, ‘feedback is taken personally’ (LeClair & Page, 2008), causing the employee to feel attacked and become insecure. Offering a seminar on how to give and receive feedback could eliminate the possibility of employees being offended by criticism. In this seminar, employees could learn more about the importance of emotional intelligence. This ‘is considered as the capacity of the individual to identify and understand his own emotions and skills to interact with others’ (Cui, 2021 p.1). Emotional intelligence measures how well employees, management, and other organizations communicate and interact with one another. Although some people are better at communicating and handling emotions than others, emotional intelligence can be a learned skill. By learning how to improve ways of leadership and communication, resolving issues in a respectful and productive manner, this will allow motivation to increase and the likelihood of negative feedback and drama to decrease.

Although there seem to be many opportunities for improvement, it is important to credit Plexus for the great company they currently are. Not only is the company successful in its marketing sectors, but it is unique and fosters a culture of employees that care about each other. By implementing our suggestions of an employee orientation, daily huddles, follow up emails, growth of open communication, code words for emails, and an improved feedback system they could be even more successful. Our hope is that our research was helpful and allowed the company another viewpoint regarding ways to improve.

References

- Braslauskas, J. (2021). Developing Intercultural Competences and Creativity: The Foundation for Successful Intercultural Communication. *Creativity Studies*, 14(1), 197–217.
- Cooper, L. O. (1997). Listening Competency in the Workplace: A Model for Training. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 60(4), 75–84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/108056999706000405>
- Cui, Y. (2021). The role of emotional intelligence in workplace transparency and open communication. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2021.101602>.
- Halawi, A., & Haydar, N. (2018). Effects of Training on Employee Performance: A Case Study of Bonjus and Khatib & Alami Companies. *International Humanities Studies*, 5(2), 24–45.
- Kibe, C. W. (2014). *Effects of Communication Strategies on Organizational Performance*, 6, 6–10. Retrieved from communication-with-cover-page-v2.pdf
- Leading Effectively staff (2021, November 5). *Use 6 active listening skills & techniques to coach others*. CCL. Retrieved November 22, 2021, from <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/coaching-others-use-active-listening-skills/>.
- LeClair, D., & Page, H. (2008, January 18). How to improve communication in the workplace. *New Hampshire Business Review*, 30(2), 21.
- Macnaughton, S., & Medinsky, M. (2015). Staff Training, Onboarding, and Professional Development Using a Learning Management System. *Partnership: The Canadian Journal*

of Library & Information Practice & Research, 10(2), 1–8.

<https://doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v10i2.3573>

Woroch, C. (2020, April 2). 10 Ways Remote Workers Can Improve Communication Skills. *U.S. News*.

<https://money.usnews.com/careers/articles/how-to-communicate-effectively-when-working-with-a-remote-team>

Yeunjae Lee, Weiting Tao, Jo-Yun Queenie Li, & Ruoyu Sun. (2020). Enhancing employees' knowledge sharing through diversity-oriented leadership and strategic internal communication during the COVID-19 outbreak. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 25(6), 1526–1549. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-06-2020-0483>