

## **Phoenix Park Gas Processors Limited: Getting Internal Communication Right**

One of the areas of poor performance in organizations is internal communication: how organizations communicate and share information with their employees. We have consistently found in our employee engagement and satisfaction surveys that organizations get low marks from their employees on internal communication. Specifically, employees say that their organizations don't keep them informed about matters affecting them; they hear about company matters first through rumors or the "grapevine;" and information is not freely shared throughout the organization, especially between departments. Information tends to get stuck at management level. And employees don't always receive adequate information on their organization's policies and procedures and plans. These findings tend to be consistent across the organizations we survey.

But we have found one "beacon of hope" in the business landscape that has consistently scored the highest on communication in our surveys. The company is **Phoenix Park Gas Processors Limited** (PPGPL). We got the company to host a "Best Practice Forum" with a group of CEOs and senior managers from our Employee Benchmark Survey Consortium, where they shared what has made them a best-in-class company in internal communication.

PPGPL is a natural gas processing and marketing company which was established in 1989 through a joint venture of local and international interests.

PPGPL's internal communication practices are driven by a vision and core values that include valuing all people, among others. The communication process begins with a philosophy which states that the company subscribes to an open communication policy with information sharing *within defined boundaries*. The philosophy seeks to engender a "safe" environment for employees by:

- Respecting all questions asked,
- Answering all questions,
- Providing communication coaching and counselling to supervisors and management, and
- Accepting responsibility when they don't get it right!

PPGPL's culture is an information-sharing culture. Specifically, the company holds a series of communication meetings with employees throughout the year. For example, corporate town hall meetings are held twice yearly with all employees, to share information on critical aspects of the business and engage employees in dialogue about these issues. At these corporate meetings, the company also reviews its performance over the past six months and launches its theme and any special initiatives for the next six months. These meetings are always led by the President. In fact, PPGPL's president, Eugene Tiah, is passionate about employee participation and information sharing.

The company also holds information sessions every Monday morning for all staff. The first Monday of each month is a departmental update, where the managers update all employees on their departmental activities and field questions from staff.

Every second Monday is what might be called an “open lecture series”, where the company will invite a prominent person or expert in a field to come and address staff on an issue of public importance. Some of the issues addressed in these fora include “environmental legislation and its impact”, “economic realities facing businesses”, “sustaining business excellence”, “stages in an organization’s life”. Some of the presenters include the Principal of the local university, the CEO of the Environmental Management Authority, members of Parliament, management consultants, bankers, religious leaders and economists.

Every third Monday of the month is the safety meeting and on the last Monday of each month, there is a financial update. Highlights of all these meetings are sent by e-mail to employees unable to attend due to absence or shift work. Employees who are on assignment in other parts of the world are never left out of the information loop.

But the communication process doesn’t stop there. There are weekly leadership team meetings, departmental meetings, operations safety meetings and monthly meetings between the leadership team and the supervisors. And, of course, there are the electronic media – Intranet, job postings, notices and reminders.

When, you may ask, do these people find time to do their work! I think that they would answer that they *are* working. PPGPL is a company that understands the power of information and knowledge and leverages that power to get the best and the most from its employees. It also understands that communication builds trust and that trust is critical to employee engagement, commitment and motivation.

Communication is not a burden at PPGPL. It is how work gets done. It is how employees are kept in the loop. And it is why employees consistently rate the company as the benchmark in communication.

Will this work for every organization? Maybe not. PPGPL is a relatively small company, with employees all based in one location. Larger companies or those with multiple locations may not be able to do what PPGPL does. However, whatever mechanism an organization uses to inform and communicate with its employees, a critical part of the process is having a culture of communication and information sharing that is CEO-driven and CEO-led. This is what makes PPGPL’s communication process a “best practice”.

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