Charting your Chat:

Fostering Employee Engagement with Internal Communication

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UConn Library

➔ Approximately 80 staff

➔ Supporting 8 library locations

➔ Significant staff turnover and loss of institutional knowledge

➔ Working and collaborating virtually

UCONN
LIBRARY

UNH Library

➜ 11 staff members

➜ Supporting appx 9,000 students and 250 faculty

➜ All working onsite

➜ Significant cultural changes after departure of long time director

University of New Haven
MARVIN K. PETERSON LIBRARY

What is Internal Communication?

"A tool, technique, medium or set of activities for the **dissemination of the company's own messages** to an internal public in order to foster an environment of greater efficiency, greater productivity, through motivation, generation and maintenance of the relationships between the participants and the search for **participation, commitment and integration of values.**"

Sánchez, M., & Villoro Armengol, J. (2021). The Implementation of New Technologies in Internal Communication: A Study of the Main Platforms and Applications. Journal of Promotion Management, 27(6), 788–811. https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2021.1888178

"If employee engagement is the destination, internal communications is the journey."

IC Thrive, 2022

The Data

Available

ClimateQUAL

perceptions concerning library's commitment to the principles of diversity, policies and procedures, and staff attitudes

Staff Self-Assessment

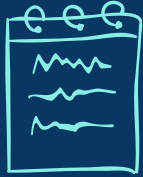Productivity, engagement, collaboration, work relationships

Targeted

### Culture of Communication

Mapping channels, targeted Slack feedback

Practices & Perceptions

Information flow, types of communication, building community

Survey Development Practices & Perceptions

➔ How does our communication impact individual engagement (perceptions)

◆ Open dialogue on work-related matters

◆ Connection to goals and vision

◆ Positive or negative connection

➔ Communication challenges

➔ Practices we should adopt
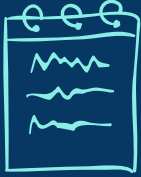
Survey Development

➔ Segmented questions in three focus areas (practices, and perceptions)

◆ Strategy and vision
◆ Policies and procedures
◆ Daily work

➔ Positive, neutral, or negative ratings
◆ Accuracy
◆ Clarity
◆ Delivery (from who you expect)
◆ Mode (channel you expect)
◆ Relevancy
◆ Timlineess
◆ Tone

When thinking about communication from library leadership regarding **strategy and vision** for the organization, think about the following elements of the communication and place them in the categories (Positive, Neutral, Negative) that you most often experience them.

| Items	
Accuracy	**Positive**
Clarity	
Delivery (information came from who you would expect)	
Mode (information came in the format/channel you would expect)	
Relevancy	**Neutral**
Timeliness	
Tone	
	Negative
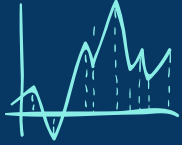
What have we found?

Strategy/Vision

➔ Mode, delivery, accuracy, tone - generally positive

➔ Clarity - generally negative

➔ Neutrals - communication is subjective

Q3 - Communication regarding strategy and vision

● Positive   ● Neutral   ● Negative
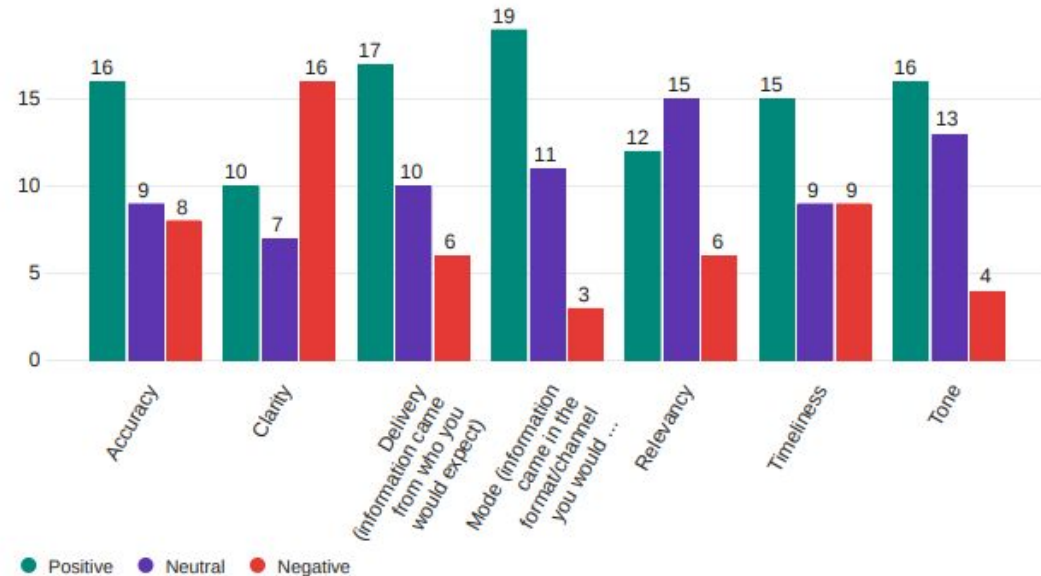
➔ Remote and hybrid work environments identified/amplified existing weaknesses and created new expected ways of working

➔ Need to find tools that shift from one-way communication to those that add more conversational opportunities

➔ Multidirectional communication with interaction and participation at all levels engages employees, which in turn encourages feelings of belonging necessary in today's environment

How do we focus our efforts to fix it?

What have we found?

Policies/Procedures

➜ Accuracy and mode continued to be positive, as well as relevancy compared to strategy and vision.

➜ Clarity still generally negative but now includes tone and timeliness

➜ Different expectations between strategy/vision & policies/procedures


Q4 - Communication regarding policies and procedures
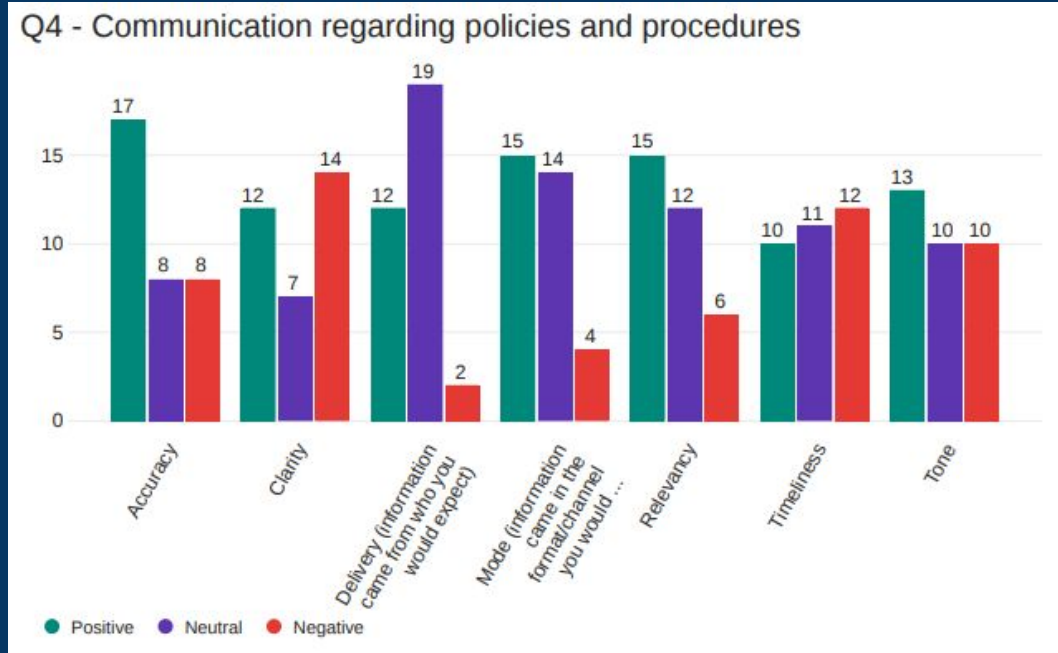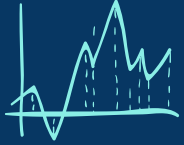
What have we found?

Daily Work

➔ Generally positive, with accuracy and delivery having the most positive responses.

➔ Timeliness and relevancy had a majority of neutral responses with an even mix of respondents listing this as a positive and a negative aspect of communication within the organization.

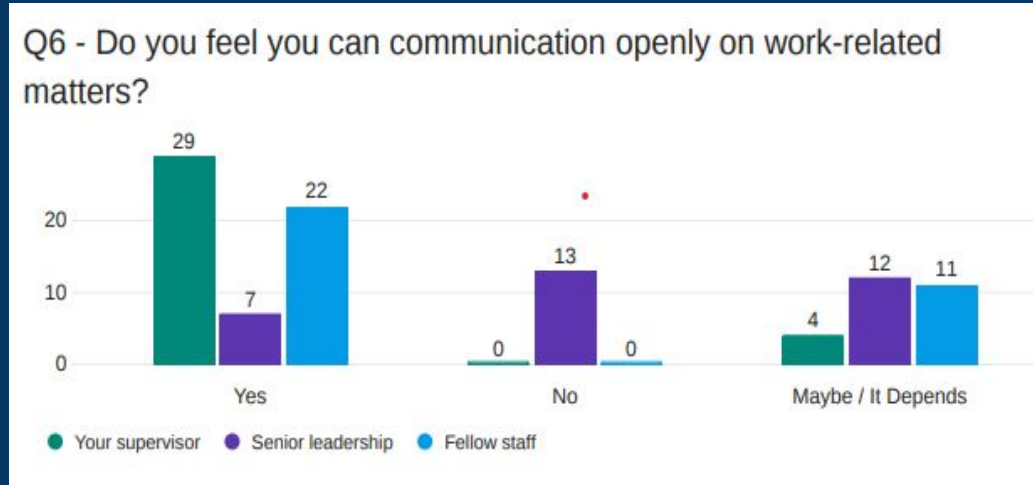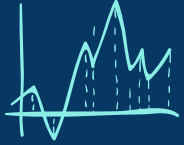Q5 - Communication affecting your daily work
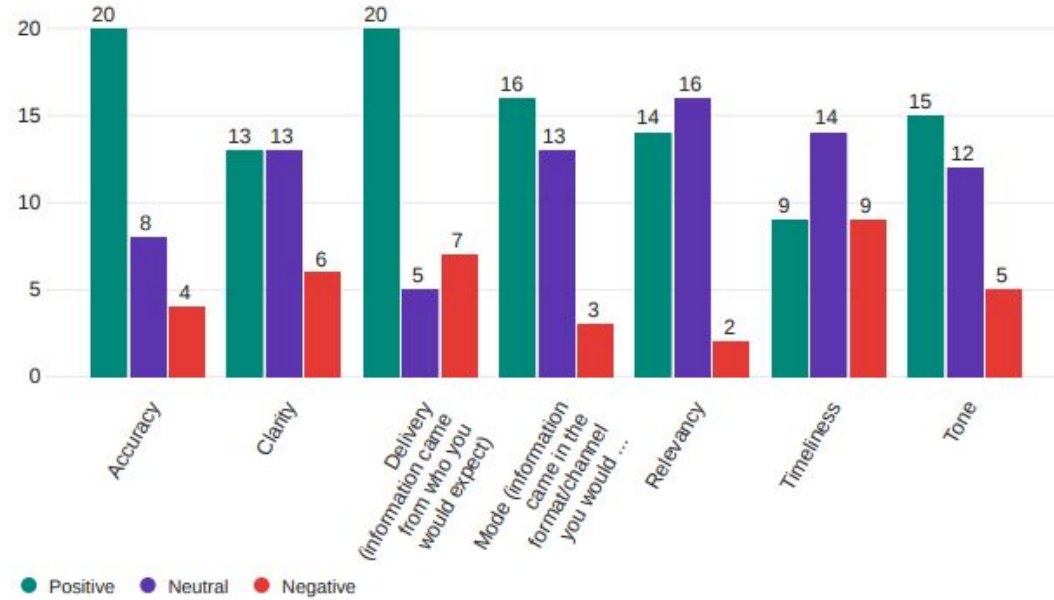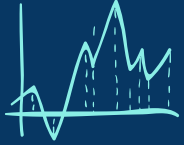
Psychological Safety

➔ 88% feel comfortable communicating with their supervisor; 66% with fellow staff

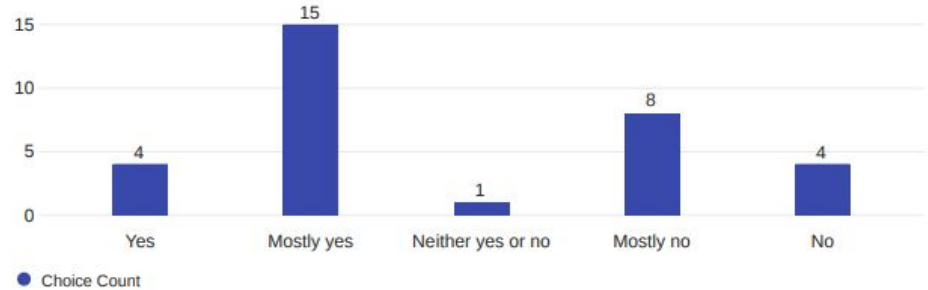➔ 40% did not feel comfortable communicating with senior leadership, followed by 36% with maybe/it depends
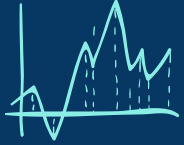

Q6 - Do you feel you can communication openly on work-related matters?

What have we found?

Engagement

➔ 59% yes / mostly yes

➔ 38% no / mostly no

Q7 - Do you feel connected to the Library's goals and vision?

|				
Yes: 4	Mostly yes: 15	Neither yes or no: 1	Mostly no: 8	No: 4

● Choice Count

What have we found?

Engagement

➜ Communications with colleagues have a positive impact on commitment to the organization.

➜ Impact of library wide/ all staff communications were more dispersed across categories

Q8 - What impact would you say particular communications usually have on your level and commitment to the broader organization?

- Library wide / all staff communications
- Communications with library colleagues outside of my unit
- Communications with my library colleagues
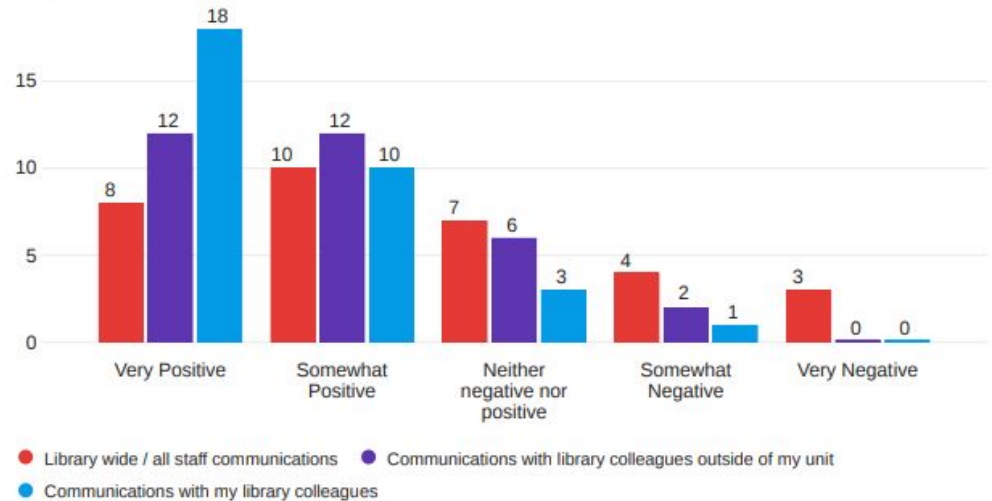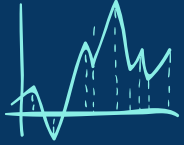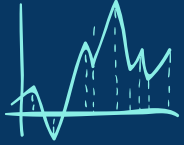
What have we found?

Challenges Observed

➔ platform proliferation and too many mechanisms for communication

➔ hierarchy and "one-way" communication

➔ lack of transparency

➔ siloing of information

➔ concerns about who is consulted or involved in decision making

➔ lack of awareness of who to contact or work with (perhaps indicative of how many new people have joined the organization)

➔ feeling overwhelmed trying to keep up with information or the pace of work

➔ frustrations over lack of response or lack of timely response from colleagues
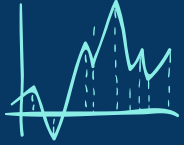
Communication Barriers

➜ Lack of trust

➜ Hierarchical structures and feelings of disconnect

➜ Burnout and disengagement
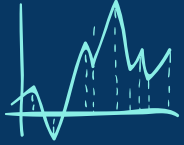
➜ Too many modes of communication

What have we found?

Perceptions

➡ Communication is often used as a scapegoat for other issues

➡ Definition of "bad communication" means different things to different people

➡ Staff can be highly critical but vague

Practices

➡ Satisfaction with unit/team level communication

➡ Dissatisfaction with library-wide communication and strategic insight

➡ Dissatisfaction with one-way communication

➡ Able to maintain relationships but not build new

Takeaways

→ No one communication style will work for all staff, some prefer informal, others formal

→ Staff expectations vary across types of communications

→ While you might not be able to "over communicate" about some issues, too many platforms or channels for communication will have a negative impact

→ Internal communication plans should include mechanisms for feedback and dialogue, think telephone not megaphone

→ Communication needs to have depth, breadth, and context

→ Provide opportunities for real dialogue and interaction where there is mutual respect and trust is essential for effective and productive internal communication.

Best Practices

- → Be clear, consistent, relevant, timely
- → Match your tone to audience and format
- → Deliver in a manner/mode that meets staff expectations
- → Utilize multiple platforms to reach all employees and supports user preferences
- → Create two-way channels to allow for feedback and conversation
- → Employ multiple messages prior to change to help with preparedness
- → Scaffold messages - strategically bold words, bullet points, links to engage at their level of interest
- → Confidentiality may hinder full disclosure, be as transparent as possible

How has this informed our next steps

UConn Library

→ Focus on adding clarity, particularly in strategic messages

→ Work with the Senior Leadership Team to find ways to engage them in conversation and decision making processes

→ Build on the engagement among colleagues by increasing communication among them

- ◆ Communication Forums - subject based forums / brown bags (eg. outreach events, writing for the web, Slack best practices, project updates, etc.)

- ◆ Informal meet-ups

How has this informed our next steps

University of New Haven Library

➔ Continued practice of regular weekly emails. Don't include just the "what" happened, but why, or what's next.

➔ Building in two way communication and honoring feedback (even when critical or hard to hear)

➔ Intentional communication and consensus building. Going slow and asking the right people.

Questions? Contacts

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