

Report: Presentation of Internal Communication Plan

Legistar No. 09663

To: Madison Water Utility Board of Commissioners
From: Robin G Piper – Finance/Accounting Manager
Date: 4/25/2008
Re: Presentation of Internal Communication Plan

The Internal Communication Plan Design Team was chartered in June 2007 to develop an internal communications plan for the Water Utility. The attached plan and recommendations are the result of much work by staff members of the utility. This plan is a work in progress and should be viewed as a template for improved communications within the utility. The design team expects that this plan will be implemented and reviewed on a regular basis. Recommendations are included as a part of the plan.

Staff Recommendation: Approval of the plan after any additional discussion.

Water Board Action: Approval of plan.

Recommendations from the Internal Communications Design Team:

- 1.) All supervisors should be provided training in how to effectively communicate with their employees, including how to conduct effective meetings. Such training should be continually enhanced by conducting ongoing periodic meetings of all Water Utility supervisory personnel to share ideas and collaborate on how to continually improve communication within the Water Utility.
- 2.) The General Manager should hold one monthly all-staff meeting for all Water Utility employees to attend.
- 3.) To increase the overall usefulness of the City's e-mail system as an effective communication tool, all Water Utility staff should be given training in computer basics, including use of the e-mail system and the word processing software used by the City. In addition, emphasis should be placed on making computers accessible to all Water Utility staff, and on ensuring that all Water Utility staff are provided adequate time to utilize available computers.
- 4.) The Internal Communications Design Team realizes that effective implementation of the Internal Communications Plan will require a cooperative effort and adherence to the plan by all Water Utility personnel. To track progress of communication improvements, a simple survey (5 or 6 short questions) should be developed by the General Manager or his or her designee(s) and administered through all supervisors to all Water Utility employees every six months. The purpose of such survey is to continually evaluate communication within the Water Utility. The survey should solicit information from all employees regarding what is and is not working well, as well as any ideas for improvement. Based on data gathered from the survey, the Internal Communications Plan should be reviewed and updated every six months by the General Manager or his or her designee(s).
- 5.) At a minimum of every six months, the Water Utility General Manager should provide an update to the Water Utility Board on the effectiveness of the Internal Communications Plan, modifications to be made to the Internal Communication Plan, and incorporate any suggestions for improvement from the Water Utility Board.
- 6.) Make greater use of the Water Utility intranet to serve as a clearinghouse for important news information regarding, for example, water main breaks, water quality issues, staff changes, etc. Develop a staff directory - with names, positions, and pictures - to post on the intranet site.
- 7.) Establish a quarterly in house Water Utility Newsletter that provides an avenue to gain a better understanding of your fellow employees through amusing anecdotes, the highlights and the lowlights of working in and for the utility and extracurricular activities.

Madison Water Utility Internal Communication Plan

Executive Summary

The Internal Communication Plan Design Team was chartered in June 2007 to develop an internal communications plan to improve communication within the Water Utility. Team membership was comprised of volunteer staff from all departments of the utility.

Team Members

Robin Piper, Finance Manager
René Puzach, Water Services Inspector
Peggy Wischhoff, Engineer 3
Jim McCormick, WU Operations Leadworker
Jim Creeron, Maintenance Mechanic 2
Jack Henderson, Waterworks Operator 2
Anne Wuethrich, Dispatcher
Joseph Grande, Water Quality Manager

The team designed a communication survey to solicit input from staff regarding topics of interest, methods and frequency of communication. The survey was administered in a workshop setting to all staff of the Water Utility during September 2007. 101 surveys were completed and the results were compiled. The Team used the data to create a communication plan for the Water Utility (Appendix A) that responded to the needs and desires of its employees.

Purpose

The Communication Plan will be a guide used by the Water Utility to effectively deliver and gather information for all internal stakeholders. A formal communication plan:

- Develops accurate details and flexible structures for communicating information internally.
- Gains the commitment and involvement of internal stakeholders – managers, supervisors, and staff throughout the Water Utility.
- Improves morale.
- Increases support within the Water Utility.
- Improves working relationships; engenders trust and idea sharing.
- Emphasizes redundancy of messages to achieve maximum effectiveness.

Goals and Objectives

- Increase knowledge of day-to-day activities across the Water Utility.
- Increase effectiveness at presenting and communicating information.
- Demonstrate the Water Utility's commitment to its employees.
- Develop positive awareness of important issues.
- Provide staff with timely information that is specific to their needs.
- Facilitate effective dialogue among all levels of the organization.
- Provide a mechanism for continuous feedback.

Critical Success Factors

- The most effective communicator, at the appropriate level of awareness delivers a consistent message at the right time, in the right format, through the right channel.
- Communications are consistent and coordinated.
- Communications use existing methods.
- Communications are an important objective for managers, supervisors, and all staff.
- Participation and suggestions are an active source of ideas for the Communication Program.
- Maintain an inventory of any communication mechanisms.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the communication plan and make adjustments as needed.

Plan Considerations

The Communication Plan proposes major tasks and assigns responsibility for carrying them out.

Strategic Considerations

- Message priorities have been identified that involve ways to optimize communication throughout the Water Utility.
- It will be necessary to revise and update the Communication Plan as it matures and results become known.
- Most of the tasks of the Communication Plan are continuing efforts; its intention is to effectively and efficiently communicate with all stakeholders through a long-term systematic process.

Tactical Considerations

Every communication must consider four essential elements:

1. **Source** – A message's meaning may be skewed depending on who is delivering the message and the receiver's perceptions of the sender. "Consider the source." To gain credibility, quote facts. Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know, but I'll find out."
2. **Content** – Simultaneously communicate both facts and benefits. Answer the questions "Why should I care? What's in it for me?" before they are asked. Communications must get the audience's attention and then motivate the receiver to act as desired. The message must be easily understood, inoffensive and excluding jargon. Tell the truth. Strong credibility can move mountains.

3. **Medium** – The message must “fit” the medium. E-mail, brochures, manuals, feedback forms, presentations and face-to-face activities, such as training seminars and internal coordination or planning meetings require different styles and approaches to be effective. One message can be communicated through several media to take advantage of each individual's unique way of absorbing information.
4. **Recipient** – The mode of communication must fit the end user. How they perceive the message through the filters of their beliefs and attitudes will affect its interpretation. Consider different learning styles. Use graphics, words, audio and visual or as many combinations as possible to optimize reception and retention.

Communication Mechanisms

A number of communication mechanisms can be used singly or in combination to communicate various messages. The Water Utility should make optimal use of existing mechanisms and established media to achieve the multi-directional transmission of information. One critical key to effective communication is to remember that redundancy equals retention. Where possible, use multiple mechanisms for communicating one message.

Appendix A Internal Communication Plan Detail				
Target Audience	Message	Method	Frequency	Responsible
New Staff	Safety Training Requirements	Water Utility Orientation	Before starting work	Supervisor, Member of Safety Committee
Q13 - Policy Changes (Dress Codes, Standard Operating Procedures, Etc.)				
All Employees	Appropriate Dress	Employee Handbook	Twice annually	Supervisor
	Appropriate Dress	Immediate Supervisor	Twice annually	Supervisor
	New Standard Operating Procedures	Immediate Supervisor to Staff	Daily	Supervisor
	Changes to Standard Operating Procedures	Immediate Supervisor to Staff	Daily	Supervisor
	Security	Employee Handbook	Annually	Supervisor
	Security	E-mail, Written Memo, Monthly Meeting	Monthly	Supervisor
	Vehicle Use	Employee Handbook	Annually	Supervisor
	Day-to-day activities	Supervisor-to-staff, Staff-to-supervisor	Daily	Supervisor
	Policy making/changing	Staff-to-supervisor/management team	Daily	Staff
Q14 - Public Meetings				
All Employees	Public Meeting Scheduled	Group meeting	Monthly	General Manager/PIO
	Public Meeting Scheduled	Face-to-face in section	Daily	Supervisor
	Public Meeting Scheduled	E-mail List-serv	Monthly	PIO
	Public Meeting Outcomes	Group meeting	Monthly	General Manager/PIO
	Public Meeting Outcomes	E-mail	Monthly	PIO

Appendix A Internal Communication Plan Detail					
Target Audience	Message	Method	Frequency	Responsible	
All Employees	Project Updates	Water Board meeting	Monthly	Project Manager/ Consultant	
	Project Updates	Intranet/ e-mail	Monthly	Project Manager	
Q11 - Well Activities / New Facilities					
All Employees	New Facility - key construction milestones	Large group meetings	Quarterly	General Manager	
	New Facility - timeline	Large group meetings	Quarterly	General Manager	
	New Facility - when operational	Large group meetings	Quarterly	General Manager	
	Well Activities - Change in Well Status	Supervisor-to-staff, Supervisor-to-supervisor	Daily	Water Supply Supervisor	
	Well Activities - Change in Well Status	E-mail or written memo	Within one week of well status change	Water Supply Supervisor	
Q12 - Safety Issues					
Supervisors	Mandatory Training	Written Memo/E-mail	Monthly	Safety Committee	
	Mandatory Training	Supervisor-to-staff	Monthly	Dept Supervisor	
		Written Memo	Monthly	Dept Supervisor	
		Group meeting	Monthly	Safety Committee	
		Water Utility Calendar	Monthly	Safety Committee	
		Bulletin Board & Safety Binders	Monthly	Safety Committee	
		Optional Training	Written Memo/E-mail	Safety Committee	
		Supervisor-to-staff	Monthly	Supervisor	
		WU Safety and Health Procedures	Safety Handbook	Annually	Supervisor, Member of Safety Committee
		Safety Concerns	Safety Action Form to Safety Committee	Within one day of occurrence	All Staff
			Safety Committee to supervisor	Monthly	Safety Committee

Appendix A Internal Communication Plan Detail				
Target Audience	Message	Method	Frequency	Responsible
All Employees	Encourage Cross Training Opportunities	Supervisor-to-Staff	Monthly	Supervisor
Q7 - Water Board Actions				
Current Staff, all employees	Board Meeting Update	Group meeting	Monthly	General Manager/PIO
Q8 - Water Emergencies				
All Employees	Water Main Break	WU Group Email	Daily updates	Dispatcher or Operator 2s
	Unit Well Failures	WU Group Email	Daily updates	Water Supply Manager
	Water Quality Issue	WU Group Email	Within one hour of detecting problem	WQ Manager/PIO
	Water Quality Issue	Supervisor-to-Staff	Daily	Supervisor
Q9 - Contractor Work / Construction Projects / New Subdivisions				
All Employees	Ongoing Water Main Replacements	Supervisor-to-staff, Supervisor-to-supervisor	Weekly	Engineering Supervisor
	Yearly Project List	Written memo, Intranet, Bulletin Board	Quarterly	Engineering Supervisor
	New Development/ New Subdivisions	Supervisor-to-staff, Supervisor-to-supervisor	Monthly	Engineering Supervisor
Dispatch/Operators/Meter Shop Office/Water Quality	Ongoing Water Main Replacements	Written memo	Weekly	Engineering Supervisor
	As-Built Information	Inspector-to-Dispatch/Operator	Within one week of project completion	Construction Inspectors
Q10 - Consultant Work / Reports and Projects				
	Project Updates	Large group meetings	Monthly	Project Manager

Appendix A Internal Communication Plan Detail				
Target Audience	Message	Method	Frequency	Responsible
Current Staff, all employees	Facility upgrades - admin bldg, operations center, vehicle storage	Group meeting	Monthly updates with opportunity for input before decisions are finalized	General Manager/PIO
	Change in business strategy (e.g. water conservation plan, rate case, borrowing, etc.)	Group meeting	Monthly	General Manager/PIO
Water Board	Master Plan, Infrastructure Plan, Well Siting Plan, Wellhead Protection Plans, etc.	Engineering report	Monthly	Principal engineer
Q4 - Water Quality Issues				
All Staff	Water Quality update	Group meeting	Monthly	WQ Manager
		E-mail	Monthly	WQ Manager
	Topics of Interest/High Importance to WU staff	Group meeting	Monthly / Bi-Monthly	WQ Manager
		Supervisor-to-supervisor, Supervisor-to-staff	Biweekly	Managers
	New Water Quality Concern	E-mail/Group meeting	Monthly	WQ Manager/PIO
Q5 - Training Opportunities				
All Employees	City Organizational Development & Training Offerings	Supervisor-to-Staff	Monthly	Departmental Supervisor
	Water Related Resources and Training Opportunities	Supervisor-to-Staff	Monthly	Departmental Supervisor
Q6 - Cross Training / Job Openings				
	Future Job Openings	Supervisor-to-Staff	Monthly	Supervisor
	Newly Created Jobs	Supervisor-to-Staff	Monthly	Supervisor

Appendix A Internal Communication Plan Detail				
Target Audience	Message	Method	Frequency	Responsible
GIS/Mapping Team	Consultant Work	Supervisor-to-staff/ Staff-to-supervisor	Weekly	Supervisor
Contractor/Plumber Requests	Ongoing, unscheduled work requests	Supervisor-to-staff/ Staff-to-supervisor/ Contractor-to-staff	Daily	Engineering Operations Clerk
Water Quality Sampler	Daily Job Assignments	Supervisor-to-Staff	Daily	Supervisor
Water Quality Inspectors	Daily Job Assignments	Supervisor-to-Staff	Daily	Supervisor
	Ongoing, unscheduled work requests	Staff-to-supervisor	Daily	Staff
Water Quality Staff	Facility or Distribution system changes	Staff-to-supervisor/ Supervisor-to-supervisor/ Journal/ E-mail/	Daily	All Staff
Meter Shop - Field	Daily Job Assignments	Lead worker to staff & printed Job Orders	Daily	Lead worker
Meter Shop - Shop	Daily Job Assignments	Lead worker to staff	Daily	Lead worker
Meter Shop - Office	Daily Job Assignments	Supervisor-to-Staff	Daily	Supervisor
Meter Readers	Daily Job Assignments	Supervisor or Admin 2-to-Staff & Printed Job Orders	Daily	Supervisor or Admin2
Water Service Inspectors	Daily Job Assignments	Supervisor or Admin Clerks-to-Staff & Printed Job Orders	Daily	Supervisor or Admin clerks
Customer Service Reps	Daily Job Assignments	Supervisor or Admin 2-to-Staff	Daily	Supervisor or Admin2
Operators/Rounders	Daily Job Assignments	Printed memo	Daily	Supervisor
	Well update, main leaks, water quality concerns	Water Journal	Daily	Supervisor/Operator
Administration section	Daily Job Assignments	Supervisor-to-Staff	Daily	General Manager
Q3 Overall Business Strategy And Long Term Direction				

Appendix A Internal Communication Plan Detail				
Target Audience	Message	Method	Frequency	Responsible
	Long-term absences, updates	Group meetings	Monthly	General manager
	Other change - (new job, retirement, etc.)	Group meetings	Monthly	Supervisor
By Section	Vacations (more than one week)	Face-to-face in section	Weekly	Supervisor
By Section	Vacations (more than one week)	Printed memo	Weekly	Supervisor
All Employees	Vacations (more than one week)	Water Utility Calendar	Weekly	Supervisor
Water Board members	New positions	Monthly staffing report	Monthly	General manager
Q2 Information Needed To Do My Day-To-Day Work				
Distribution section	Today's priorities	Face-to-face	Daily	Supervisor
	Main leaks	Group meeting	Daily	Supervisor
	Contractor work	Group meeting	Daily	Supervisor
Water Supply section	Facility maintenance: wells, reservoirs	Supervisor-to-Supervisor	Daily	Supervisor
		Supervisor-to-Staff	Daily	Supervisor
		Water Journal	Shift change	Operators
	Main leaks	Supervisor-to-Supervisor	Daily	Supervisor
		Supervisor-to-Staff	Daily	Supervisor
		Water Journal	Shift change	Operators
Maintenance section	Daily Job Assignments	Supervisor-to-Staff	Daily	Supervisor
Finance section	Daily Job Assignments	Supervisor-to-Staff	Daily	Supervisor
Engineering/Construction Engineering Hourly Staff Flushing Team	Contractor Activities	Supervisor-to-Staff	Daily	Supervisor
	Daily Job Assignments	Supervisor-to-Staff	Daily	Supervisor
	Daily Job Assignments	Supervisor-to-Staff	Daily	Supervisor

Appendix A Internal Communication Plan Detail				
Target Audience	Message	Method	Frequency	Responsible
Q1 Staff Changes in the Utility				
Current Staff, all employees	Position opening	Group meetings	Monthly	Program Assistant (Heim) / Administrative Clerk (Op Center)
		Email	Weekly	Program Assistant (Heim)/PIO
		Face-to-face in section	Weekly	Supervisor
		Supervisor-to-Supervisor	Twice monthly	Management Team
		Internal posting - bulletin board, reception desk	Daily	Program Assistant (Heim) / Administrative Clerk (Op Center)
	Position filled, by whom	Group meetings	Monthly	Program Assistant (Heim) / Administrative Clerk (Op Center)
		Email	Weekly	Program Assistant (Heim)/PIO
		Face-to-face in section	Weekly	Supervisor
		Supervisor-to-Supervisor	Twice monthly	Management Team
	Introductions of new staff	Face-to-face in section	First day of work	Supervisor or Dept Representative
		Group meetings	Monthly	Program Assistant (Heim) / Administrative Clerk (Op Center)
Long-term absences, initial announcement	Follow-up Email	Within one week of starting work	Supervisor	
	WU intranet (photo, with job description or change in resp.)	Within one week of starting work	Supervisor/PIO	