



# ELIMINATING COMMUNICATION SILOS WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION

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By Tara Carr, Small Business Development Director at UW-Green Bay

The traditional organization structure has changed with technology advancements. Business needs have driven the traditional organization to become mobile with location flexible employees, while managing multiple locations and serving the needs of boundaryless customers. The global economy continues to be a major focus for colleges and universities, manufacturing, financial, and service industries. The vastness of the global business model and the overwhelming speed of technology has created new communication challenges within many organizations.

Communication plays an integral role in the success of an organization. Effective communication between departments results in achieving a goal, while improving productivity and employee morale. There is a strong correlation between effective communication skills and positive relationships in the work environment. The stronger the relationships, the more effective the communication is between departments. Effective internal communication, in any organization, is imperative for positive employee morale and engagement, consistent leadership, business growth and successful implementation of strategic planning.

For internal organizational communication to be successful, the following principles need to be in place: deliver timely responses, responses have the correct and adequate content, accurate delivery method (email, face-to-face, phone), words aligned with actions, approachability to encourage discussions, employee participation in decision making, recognizing achievements, leadership visibility, and creating a two-way communication culture.

The greater the distance (physical location or emotional) between departments, the greater the communication barriers are exemplified across multiple and distant locations. The ‘out of sight and out of mind’ principle is quite relevant. To overcome the distance barrier, leadership must emphasize the value of consistent and timely communication between departments and work to establish relationships between business locations. Communication gaps exist, between departments, because of the lack of knowledge of the interdependencies of each role within the company and why the sharing of information is essential.



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Socrates once stated: “To know, is to know that you know nothing. That is the meaning of true knowledge”. The phrase “you don’t know what you don’t know” can have a similar interpretation and is prevalent within organizations. The lack of knowledge and awareness of how the organization operates and how dependent each department is upon one another is a crucial mistake that leadership tends to overlook. For large organizations to be effective, the leader of each department must understand and value the importance of how their job affects each part of the business. Once this understanding and respect takes place, then the right information will be shared with the right people in a timely manner. If departments operate in a silo, then the business will operate in a reactive mode. The Silo Mentality is a mindset present when certain departments or leaders do not wish to share information with others within the same company. This type of mentality will reduce efficiency in the overall operation, reduce morale, and may contribute to the demise of a productive company culture. For improved communication, organizations need to continue to break down the silos between departments, as well as the silos that exist between multiple locations.

Placing accountability on each department, for communicating the information and service they provide to the organization, is imperative for growth and employee satisfaction. Nurturing relationships and learning about the interdependency of other departments will lead to a positive change and implementation of the mission organizations are striving to achieve. Unified leaders that work together to achieve the common goal of the organization result in a staff that follows suit. Congruency in leadership will break down the silos, which will create departmental efficiencies and encourage cross-functional communication and effectiveness.

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The Wisconsin Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at the University of Wisconsin Green Bay is part of a statewide network of SBDCs working with business owners and entrepreneurs to facilitate business growth and improvement, and to launch successful new companies. The Small Business Development Center offers a variety of services: no-cost business consulting, customized business solutions, financial management, growth & strategic planning, and professional development training.

