Communication – Essential for Success

Today’s topic is Communication. Regardless of the size of your station, effective communication skills are essential for success. You are the gatekeeper of all information flowing to and from your staff. It is important that you create an atmosphere of openness and it is most important that you listen.

Today we will focus on communicating with your staff and licensee. Of course you must also wear the communication cap with your board, with your community, and with your audience, but we will focus on the two primary communications in this segment.

My Licensee Does Not Understand

You are the one department on campus that absolutely cannot hide. Your station is the most visible entity the university has, so hiding is not an option. “My licensee does not understand” is a common sentiment among station managers. You are not alone in that feeling. All the departments reporting to their respective bosses within the university structure have that same feeling. “What we do is important,” “What we do makes a difference,” and “We reflect the values of this institution,” are phrases that can be made by you and/or any other department, school, or college on your campus. The key is to speak your university’s language: translate what it is your station does in meaningful terms your university administration can understand. Institutions of higher learning typically have three functions that define their offering: educating students, advancing knowledge and providing public service. If your licensee’s focus is budget, focus on how your station generates resources to match, double, triple or quadruple their investment. The licensee’s association with the station will far exceed their expense (if any) and the return in community good will and integrity is priceless. It is your responsibility to help your licensee understand. No one else can do it. Also, communicate your value to as many persons of power within your university as possible.

Communicating with Your Licensee

Create a university administrator email distribution list. Most universities use Outlook or a similar Email system, and it is simple to create distribution lists. Add every administrator - President, Provost, VP’s, Deans, Faculty Council President, Staff Advisory President, Student Council President and anyone who may be in a position to review your station in the future. When Presidents and Provosts are replaced, the people selecting their replacements will be chosen from this group. When you are replaced, the people selecting your replacement will be chosen from this group. They should know all about your station and its value as a public service, life-long learning resource, and outreach vehicle. This is your job.

Communicating with Your Staff

Again, create an email distribution list and use it to keep them informed. Depending on the size of your station, you may want two lists, one for department heads and one for all staff. Sometimes, the smaller the station the more difficult it is to keep informed because everyone is doing multiple tasks. Don’t have meetings just to have meetings but if you schedule one, follow through. Develop an agenda, distribute it before hand, and then follow it. Inform others when and where you will be if you are out of the station. Make everyone feel like they are the first to know rather than “the last to know” or “No one told me”. Include staff in the planning process. More involvement will result in more buy-in of goals and objectives. Don’t forget to praise people for their good work. A kind word and/or recognition of a job well done will go far to inspire others.

*University is a generic term for universities, colleges, school districts, and state agencies.