

Coffee catch-ups used to measure communications effectiveness

March 5 2009

(PhysOrg.com) -- New research has found that most businesses measure the effectiveness of internal communication in the most obvious way possible: by asking staff what they think.

But because this is done informally it may not be an effective measure, say the researchers, postgraduate communication students from the University's College of Business.

Kate McDavitt and Bruce Faull presented the findings of their research project to the New Zealand chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators recently.

They had surveyed about 100 businesses - all members of the association - to find out how they measured the effectiveness of their own communication practices.

They found that while 89 per cent businesses that responded to the survey agreed it was important to measure the effectiveness of internal communication, the most widespread method was anecdotal evidence - including chatting over a coffee.

Kate McDavitt says the findings show willingness to improve professional practice but few adopted tangible practices. Lack of time, lack of budget and lack of management support were seen to be the main barriers.

“These barriers reflect the findings of similar international surveys,” Ms McDavitt says. “What they don't tell us is why these barriers persist. If measurement of internal communication is important then time and budget should not stop measurement activity. Further research into the perceived lack of management support would be useful.”

Mr Faull says while it may not be surprising that in New Zealand organisations surveyed much “measurement” of communication effectiveness was based on anecdotal evidence, it was disappointing to find that many participants knew there were more credible methods but did not employ them.

The association commissioned the study, in partnership with Massey University Wellington, as part of a wider programme of research on communication issues. Of the association members sent the survey about 20 per cent responded and just under three quarters of those were from the central or local government sectors.

Provided by Massey University

Citation: Coffee catch-ups used to measure communications effectiveness (2009, March 5) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-03-coffee-catch-ups-effectiveness.html>

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