



Cascade Communication Agency

...moving mountains one day at a time

Communication Audit of Lancer Productions

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Cascade Communication Agency

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Longwood University's Lancer Productions Organization

Communication Audit

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Mission Statement

*Our mission at the Cascade
Communication Agency is to assist our clients in
improving overall productivity while providing our
communication skills to better the organization.*

Executive Summary

In this analysis, the Cascade Communication Agency has conducted a communication audit of Longwood University's student organization Lancer Productions. Founded on analysis of the information collected through interviews, observations, and surveys, the Cascade group has compiled an in-depth summary of strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations for improvement to further assist Lancer Productions in attaining exemplary communication within the organization.

Strengths

Through our observations and collection of data through interviews and surveys, the Cascade group has pinpointed three major communication strengths of Lancer Productions. Overall, our data showed a major trend in the strength of face to face communication as the most efficient channel of communication. Our research shows that the majority of the responses said that email was used the second most, and Facebook was used the least amount. Face to face communication is not only the most efficient channel of communication, but also the most preferred and most used. There was also an overwhelming satisfaction within the organization with the efficiency and productivity of committee meetings. Finally, the majority of members surveyed conveyed their satisfaction with the system of feedback within the organization's committees, as well as the advisor.

Opportunities for Improvement

Over the course of our audit, the Cascade group has identified two major areas of communication that we believe should be touched upon to better the organization. The Cascade group found that communication between the executive board and general members is an area that could use improvement. Through interviews, we have concluded that many general members feel there is an under load of information, whereas some members of the executive board feel as though the general members are un-interested. Another trend that we observed through our surveys, observations, and interviews is that a majority of both general members, as well as members of the executive board feel that although meetings often run well, they oftentimes slide off task.

Recommendations

Based on the data analyzed, the Cascade group is prepared to offer some recommendations to Lancer Productions with the hope of enhancing the organizations communication needs. One recommendation is for the organization to hold an open forum at one of their meetings. This would give everyone the opportunity to voice their concerns, and work towards a conclusion together. In addition, to address the issue of inter-committee relations, as well as relationships between general members and executive members, the Cascade group recommends that Lancer Productions holds events other than meetings in which only members are invited. Our hope is that this will improve communication between all members.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to better understand how organizational members of Lancer Productions experience and interpret communication within the organization. This report is developed by the Cascade Communication Agency, a group of Comm. 364- Applied Organizational Communication students. Through a detailed communication audit, Cascade Communication Agency will evaluate and explore an innovative approach to communication for the Lancer Productions Organization. Authorization was given by the Lancer Productions Organization for audit research to be conducted over the course of fall 2009. The scope and focus was primarily on communication between members of the organization. We focused on different means of communication with the Executive Members, Advisor, and General Members in the organization.

Research Methods

Throughout the communication audit, Cascade Communication Agency gathered information using observations, surveys, and interviews. All members of Lancer Productions were given the opportunity to participate in the online survey. Interviews were given to a group of Executive Members as well as a small portion of the General Member group.

Observations

Over the duration of the fall 2009 semester, members of the Cascade Communication Agency observed the organization in their weekly general member meetings that took place every Tuesday from 8-9 PM. Through these observations, we visited individual committees and gathered information on how these individual meetings were being conducted.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted from sampling a group of Executive Members within the organization, as well as several general members. We conducted these interviews primarily within their daily office hours.

Survey

Surveys were conducted using the online site *surveymonkey.com*. This allowed us to customize and develop a questionnaire that collected and analyzed the results in order for us to organize the data. The data is easily transferred to charts and graphs for simple analysis of the information. The survey was completed by 19 members of the organization. Participants were asked about their communication, motivation, relationships, and suggested areas of improvement within the organization.

Organizational Strengths

The following is an overview of several strengths of communication within the Lancer Productions Organization:

- Good system for feedback within the organization
- Effective use of face-to-face communication
- Committee meetings are effective and run smoothly

Good System for Feedback within the Organization

The research gathered shows that many members agree there is adequate feedback within the organization (Figure 1.1). In addition, the results of our interviews show a trend of great satisfaction with the timeliness of feedback from their advisor. There is adequate information to conclude that only a handful of members felt that they were not given the opportunity to provide feedback within their organization; most everyone felt that they were given the opportunity to provide feedback in the organization.

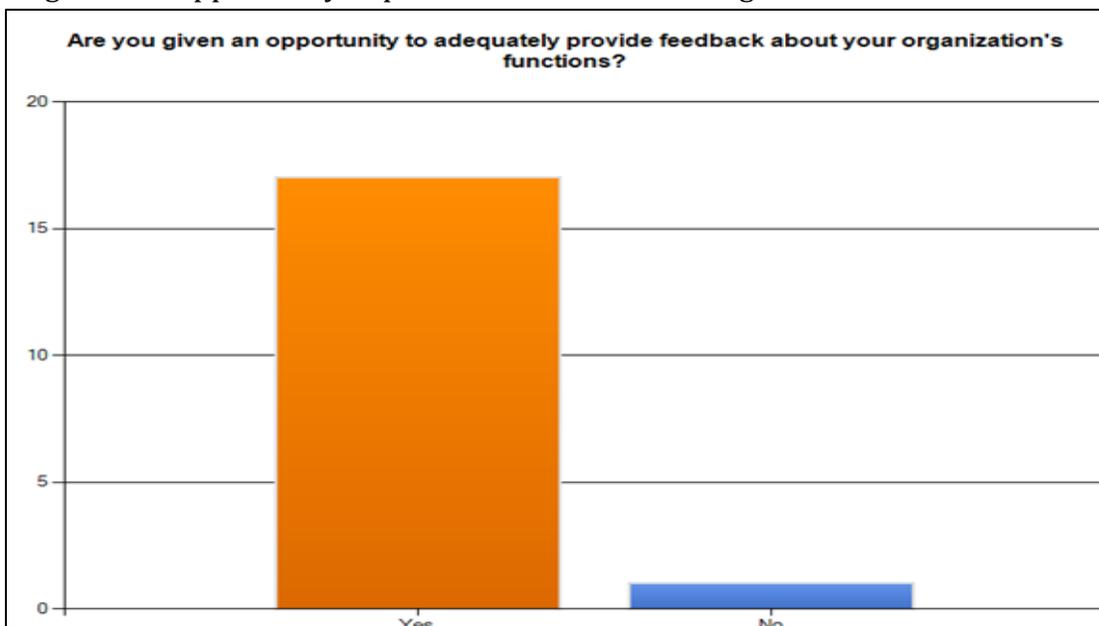


Figure 1.1 Demonstrates the overall feelings of opportunity to provide feedback about the organization's functions

- Survey found that 95% of those polled felt there was adequate opportunity in regards to feedback
- One survey participant stated that they are given the opportunity; however, "the organization as a whole does not listen/ adequately digest the advice/feedback they are given."
- However, another member stated "I do get to express my opinions in exec. meetings, but I enjoy hearing what others have to say in the general meetings."

Preferred Methods of Communication

Face to face is the communication method used most often, and is also the most preferred and most effective form of communication. The results show that face to face communication is more personal and helps establish a bond between the members. 13 out of 19, or 68.4%, LP members said face to face communication is very effective with general members. 12 out of 19, or 63.2%, LP members said face to face communication is very effective with executive board members. 55% of LP members say face to face communication is the most preferred method of communication (Figure 1.2). Although most members of the organization preferred face to face communication, some found that e-mails, text messages and Facebook were helpful tools also.

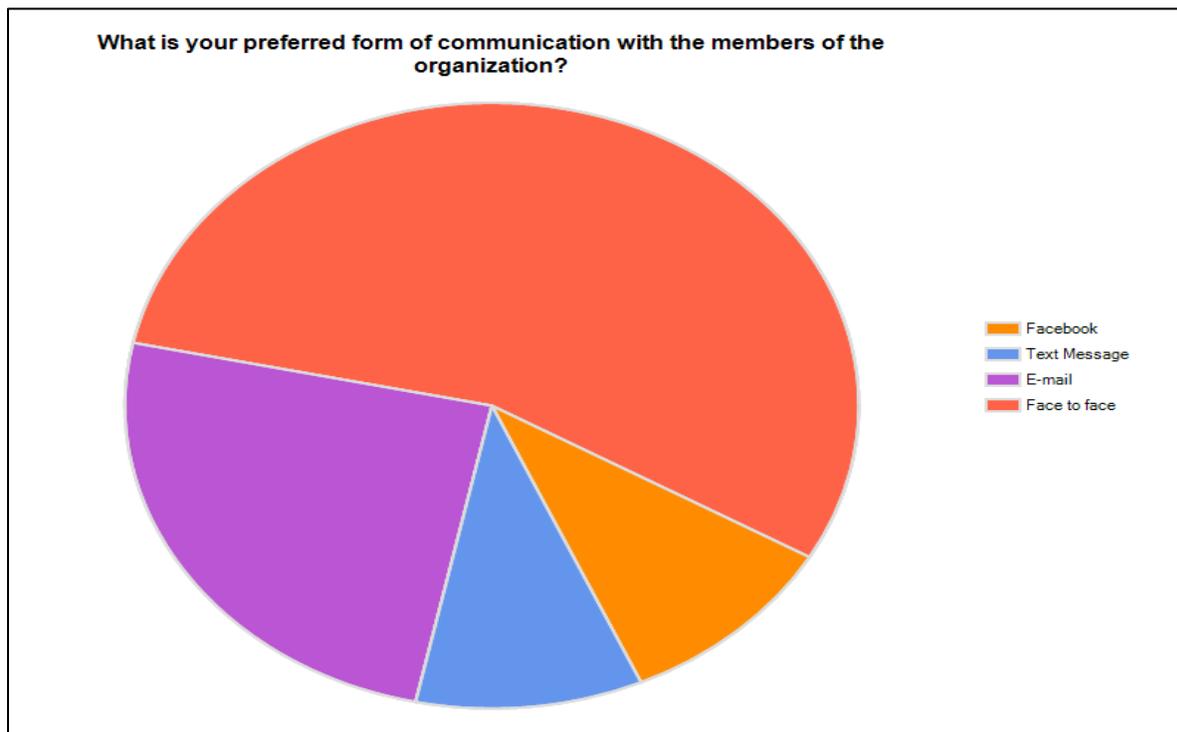


Figure 1.2 Displays the preferred form of communication among members in the organization as reported by members of the organization.

- One member said Face to face was the effective “because then you don't misinterpret what someone says or asks you to do.”
- Another participant stated, “Right now I believe Face to Face and by phone through calling or texting works best for us, since we are all on the go so much.”
- In contrast, however, one member felt face to face was the least effective form because “when a member asks for information the board member usually says I don't know or just doesn't answer.”

Committee Meetings are Effective and Run Smoothly

Survey results found that 66.7% believe the committee meetings run smoothly, cooperatively, and in a timely manner (Figure 1.3). However, in the survey 27.8% believe meeting are productive and can sometimes get off task. Most members stated that meetings are effective and run smoothly, but some believed that meetings can sometimes get off task and are not always productive.

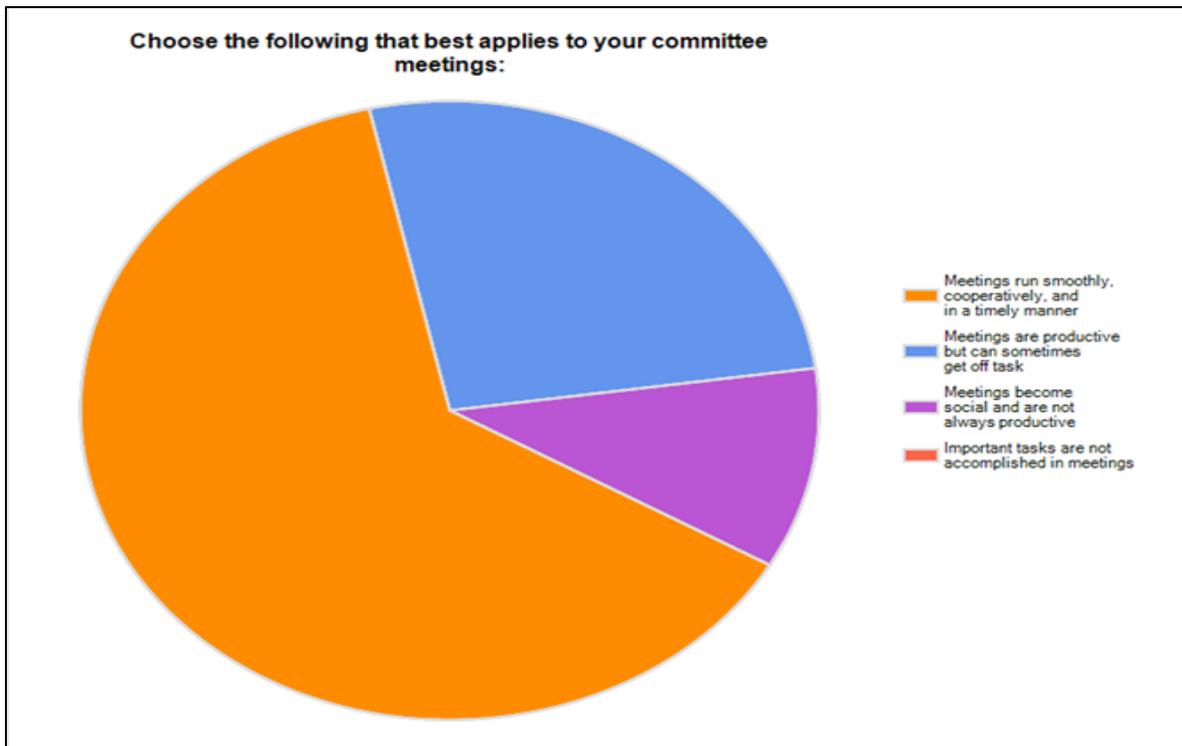


Figure 1.3 Examines the quality and effectiveness of committee meetings as reported by participants in our study

Opportunities for Improvement

Build a better relationship between Executive Members and General Members

Overall, our research finds that members in the organization would like to feel closer with one another on the executive and general member levels (Figure 2.1). Many interviews and surveys show that members believe there is not enough bonding between the two groups. Also, they feel that there should be a get together to include everyone in the organization. While some general members feel as though the executives don't reach out to them, several executives believe it is sometimes difficult to establish a bond with those outside their committee. Although 66.7% of those that participated in the survey show satisfaction with the relationship between the executives and general members, 33.3% state that they are unsatisfied with the relationship.

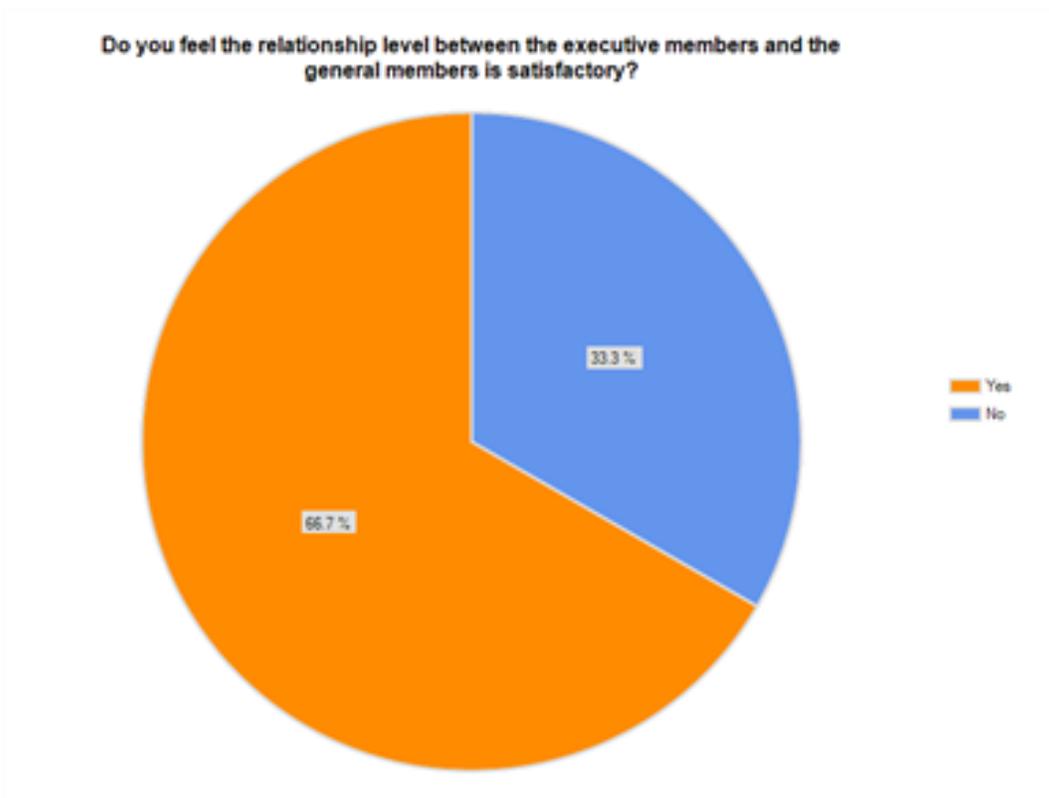


Figure 2.1 Shows the perceived satisfaction of the relationship between Executive members and General members according to the results from the survey.

Lancer Productions general meetings can sometimes get off task

Several people feel that the weekly general meetings can sometimes get off track and are time-costly. 11 out of the 18 people who took the online survey believe that weekly Lancer Productions general meetings are productive and can sometimes get off task (Figure 2.2). However, 6 of the 18 people who took the online survey believe the weekly meetings run smoothly, cooperatively, and in a timely manner.

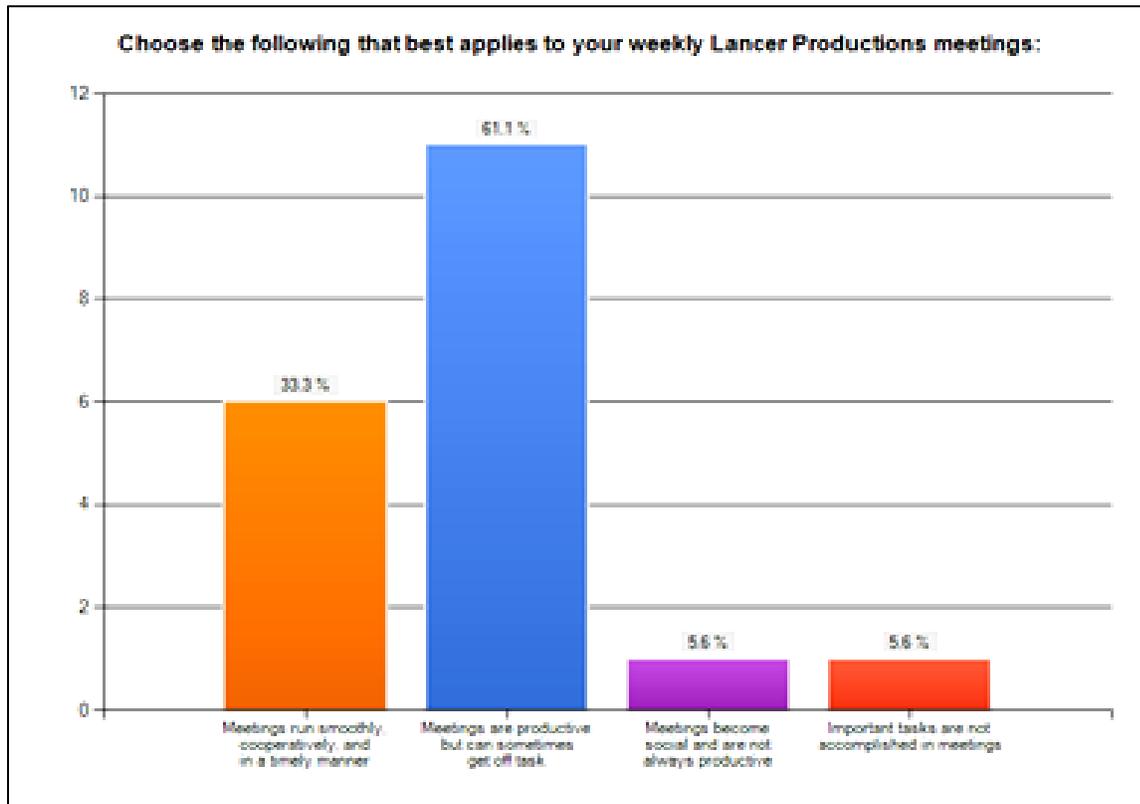
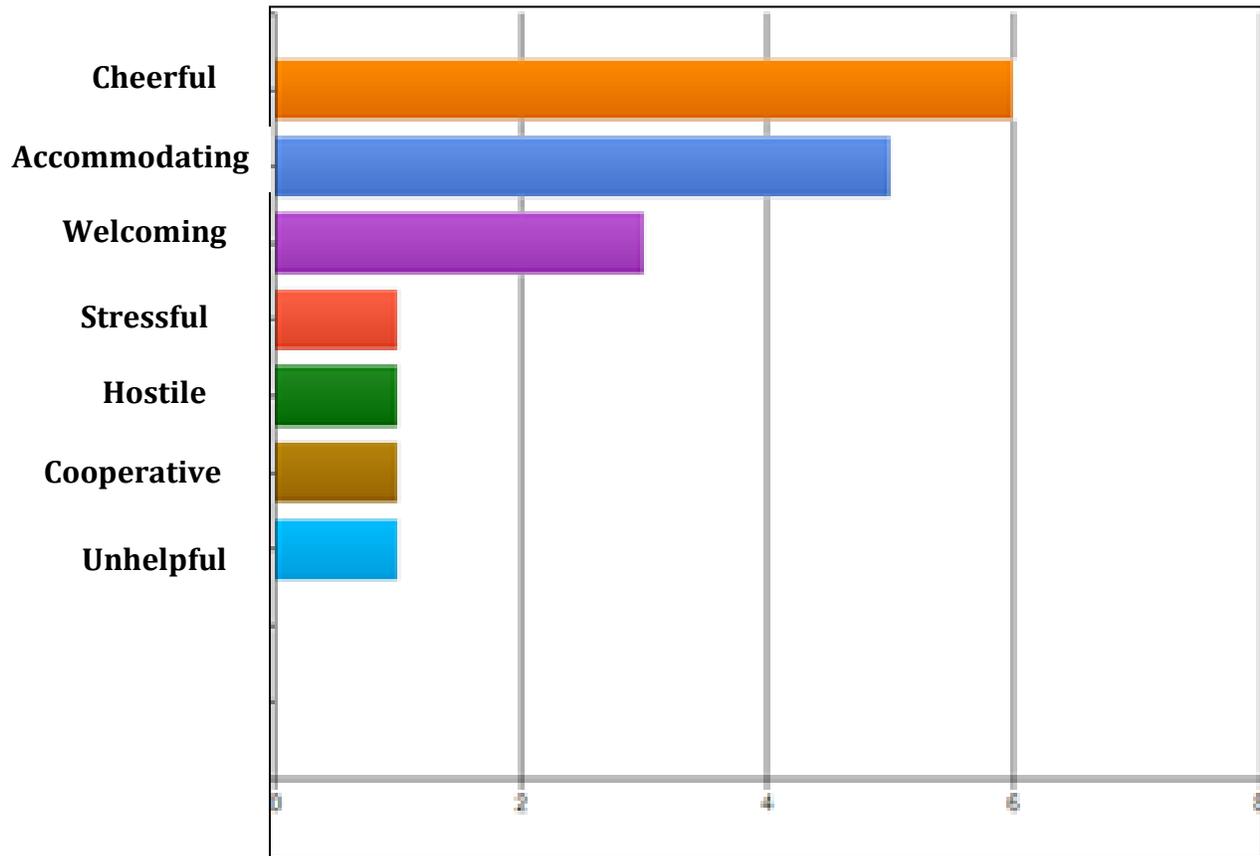


Figure 2.2 Shows the levels of efficiency and perceived productivity of weekly Lancer Productions meetings

- Survey participants were asked to make one suggestion to improve the quality of weekly meetings. The responses are detailed below:
 - One member stated that “general meetings need to be done separately from committee meetings.”
 - Other suggestions include: “Everyone needs to be involved, not just information being thrown out to the members with no discussion and then move on;” “Focus on the big issues, little things can be smoothed out during committee meetings;” “GENERAL meetings need to be for the GENERAL body of LP. Committee meetings need to be at a separate date/time which should be at the discretion of the individual committees;” “Have executive meetings way before general meetings. I feel like I learn too much new things at the executive meetings so my schedule gets messed up for the general meetings;” “Not have committee meetings during the general members meeting, instead schedule a separate time to have committee meetings during the week.”

Overall perception of the environment of Lancer Productions



Opportunities to Grow

Creating Attendance Policies

Executive members have said that the meetings tend to be more informal than formal, which makes the members see the meetings as unimportant and lowers the number of actual members attending all of the weekly meetings. Creating a more formal atmosphere at meetings by setting membership attendance policies might ensure that members are attending meetings and staying active in the organization. To be an active member in the organization, each member should have a goal of attending a total of 75% of all meetings and if the member does not reach this goal, then they could possibly lose their membership role in the organization. Obtaining these guidelines might create problems within the organization. Members could have other obligations on a weekly basis and might not be able to attend 75% of all meetings. These new guidelines could also make meetings less interactive and more business-like, which could create boredom and frustration from some members. This boredom and frustration could result in fewer member turnouts because the meetings are not fun or exciting to general members anymore.

Hold Events Only for Members Outside of Weekly Meetings

Several members of this organization have stated their frustration with the lack of communication between the executive board members and the general members. Creating a tighter bond allowing better communication between these two groups will definitely strengthen the operation of this organization. Establishing events outside of the organizations regular meeting times that only the members of Lancer Productions would attend could be a very good start to creating better communication within the organization. Having movie nights, potluck dinners, or game nights with all of the members could help create stronger bonds with everyone and allow for easier communication. These events could cause some problems in the organization because not all members might be able to attend. The non-attending members could feel left out and rumors could even start going around the organization at these functions. Overall, these events would be beneficial to the organization, because it would allow for better communication outside of meetings and create a stronger bond between all members of the organization.

Members Bringing Friends to Meetings and Events

Members have complained about not having enough people come to their events. Another complaint from most of the members is that there are not enough members in the organization and soon there will not be a Lancer Productions if there are not enough members to run it. If every member brought a new person to each meeting and event, this might be an effective way to fix both of these problems in the organization. Bringing new people to events and meetings could let more individuals see how Lancer Productions operates and would definitely bring new members into the organization. This could cause problems in the organization if the attendance policies mentioned above were put into place because the new people at each meeting would not have the opportunity to attend at least 75% of all meetings. Involving more individuals in meetings and events and inviting at least one new person a week could potentially create a rapidly growing and more involved organization if that is what the current members are striving for in the future.

Interview and Survey Results Summary

Overall findings

Overall, we found that Lancer Productions had strong communications within the organization. We found that a majority of the members who were interviewed or took the online survey were very satisfied with the level of face to face communication and felt that it was the most efficient channel of communication. Also we found that there was a good system of feedback within the organization after an event, especially from the advisor. Another finding that we have come up with is that the committee meetings are run very efficiently in order to maximize productivity.

However, our group also found that communication between the executive board and general members should be worked on. Some general members feel there is an under load of information, whereas some members of the executive board feel as though the general members are un-interested. In addition, many of both the general members as well as executive board members mentioned that the meetings, while they run smoothly, are sometimes off task; this is also something that the organization might want to work on.

Most important findings

One of the most important of our key findings was the level of face to face communication. This is an important finding as many of the members agreed that it was the best channel for communication when attempting to solve problems and address any questions.

Another key finding was the work that needs to be done on the relationship between general members and the exec board. It is a necessity for both sides of the organization to work together to better accomplish their goals. If one side of the organization is not informed about a topic, it may be hard to work efficiently.

What communication practices does this encourage?

Our findings encourage communication practices to continue to be increased. Some of these practices that should be continued are: the use of face to face interactions as the main channel for communication within the organization, as well as the high level of feedback that the members of the organization receive.

New Challenges

Some of the challenges that may be raised as a result of our findings may be: improving the communication between the general members and executive board members, as well as finding a way for the organization to stay on task while conducting meetings. One way that these challenges may be addressed could be to hold a sort of forum for the members of the organization to voice their opinions.

Theoretical Relevance

Key Ideas:

- Downward flow needs improvement
- Upwards flow should be encouraged

Horizontal communication is great between executives but needs to exist between general members outside their own committees.

Social/Maintenance function

The social/maintenance function is the act of placing high value on cooperative interpersonal and group interactions, and to keep personal functioning well together. Interpersonal relationships often suffer as people clash trying to accomplish a task: as a result, work may grind to a halt. Staff socials, some meetings, personal news in newspapers, and teamwork seminars are oriented toward the maintenance function.

Superior-subordinate relationships

Supervisors are the most important communication link in the organization. Interpersonal trust must be established and present for communication effectiveness. Message exchange is important, members limit upward communication if they believe the execs or supervisor is not open.

Co-worker relationships

Good teamwork within groups but problems are not helped by the whole organization as a unit. Executives have good co-worker relationships but general members barely know them or each other.

Unit relationship

Organizations succeed on the basis of coordination. Executives and members alike increasingly appreciate importance of interdepartmental communication. It is essential that the departments have knowledge of what others were doing were capable of doing in order to create new products and improve technologies.

Conclusion

Organizational changes can be positive and negative within an organization. Applying the suggested improvements for growth we constructed will hopefully bring the Lancer Productions Organization together as a whole. In order to implement this proposal, all members of the organization must be open and willing to promote change in communication styles previously demonstrated. Adapting to a more open and welcoming environment between Executive members and General members will enhance group cohesiveness. Additionally, many members who participated in the survey/interviews stated that they would like to see more events only for members of Lancer Production where they can get to know each other outside of their committee groups.

Furthermore, through observations during weekly meetings, it became apparent that general members attend meetings at random. There are never a set number of members in attendance, which creates a lack of communication within the organization. It is suggested that an attendance policy should be implemented for all members. To be an active member in the organization, each member should have a goal of attending a total of 75% of all meetings throughout the semester. If the member does not reach this goal, then they could possibly lose their membership role in the organization. Additionally, many felt that there are not enough members in the organization and soon there will not be a Lancer Productions if there are not enough members to run it. In order to fix both issues, every member could bring a new person to each meeting and event.. Bringing new people to events and meetings could allow more individuals to see how Lancer Productions operates and would definitely bring new faces into the organization.

Overall, continuing to build communication relationships among members of Lancer Productions will benefit the organization greatly. There is great satisfaction with the current face-to-face communication in the organization, and allowing for the adaptation of more frequent communication practices is a high determinant to the succession of Lancer Productions.

Appendices

Appendix A Interview Instrument

- 1.) Auditor: Introduce ourselves and explain the purpose of the interview.
- 2.) Identify name and position of the interviewee
- 3.) Describe your position in the organization.
 - a. What are your chief responsibilities?
 - b. With whom or with what positions do you regularly communicate?
- 4.) Describe the way decisions are made in your organization.
 - a. What decisions do you normally make?
 - b. What information do you need to make these decisions?
 - c. Are these formal or informal policies that determine how you get information?
- 5.) Describe the organization's primary objectives for this year.
 - a. How does the organization know when it has done a good or bad job? What are the criteria for success?
- 6.) What kinds of communication are necessary for you to have with other organizations (Oktoberfest/spring weekend performers)?
- 7.) Describe the formal and informal channels through which you typically receive information.
- 8.) What are the communication strengths of the organization? What are the weaknesses?
- 9.) When conflict occurs, how is it resolved? What normally causes conflict? If you have a suggestion to improve communication, how would you make it?
- 10.) Describe the communication relationship you have with:
 - a. your immediate supervisor
 - b. subordinates
 - c. fellow officers

If extra time remains:

- 11.) How do you get ideas about how your supervisors feel about your work?
- 12.) How often do you receive information of little value?
 - a. How often are you overloaded with information?
 - b. How often do you feel you get too little information?
- 13.) Describe the chain of command in this organization and how it operates.
- 14.) Is there anything that I have left out that I should have included?

Appendices

Appendix B Survey Instrument

Survey for Lancer Productions:

Informed Consent:

The purpose of this study is to better understand how organizational members of Lancer Productions experience and interpret communication within the organization. This survey is presented by the Cascade Communication Agency, a group of Comm. 364- Applied Organizational Communication students.

Your responses are confidential and anonymous, and will only be used for research purposes.

This survey should take you approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

Thank you for your time and participation.

1. I give my consent to participate in this survey.

Yes

No

Communication:

1. How often do you use the following forms of communication when communicating with general members of your organization?

Never Very Rarely Sometimes Very Frequently Always

Facebook

Text Messaging

E-mail

Face to Face

Other (please specify)

2. How often do you use the following forms of communication when communicating with the executive board members of your organization?

Never Very Rarely Sometimes Very Frequently Always

Facebook

Text Messaging

E-mail

Face to Face

Other (please specify)

3. How effective would you rate the communication tool that is used with general members in your organization?

Very Ineffective Ineffective Effective Somewhat Effective Very Effective

Facebook

Text Messaging

E-mail

Face to Face

Other (please specify)

4. How effective would you rate the communication tool used with the executive board members in your organization?

Very Ineffective Ineffective Effective Somewhat Effective Very Effective

Facebook

Text Messaging

E-mail

Face to Face

Other (please specify)

5. What is your preferred form of communication with the members of the organization?

Facebook

Text Message

E-mail

Face to Face

Other (please specify)

- 6. If the communication could be changed in any way to make your organization more productive, please state how in the space provided.
- 7. Which methods of communication are the least effective within your organization? Why?
- 8. Which methods of communication are the most effective? Why?

Relationships:

- 1. On average, how much time do you spend with other members of LP outside of your organizational functions in a week?

- No Time
- 1-2 Hours
- 2-4 Hours
- 4-6 Hours
- More than 6 Hours

- 2. How would you rate your satisfaction level with the following Lancer Productions Members:

Very Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Indifferent Satisfied Very Satisfied

- General Members
- Executive Board
- Advisor

Additional Comments

- 3. Do you feel the relationship level between the executive members and the general members is satisfactory?

- Yes
- No

Please explain your answer.

- 4. How would you rate these forms of publicity to Longwood students with regards to your organizations' events?

Very Ineffective Ineffective Slightly Effective Effective Very Effective

- Facebook Group/Event
- Flyers
- Word of Mouth
- Table Tents
- Weekly E-mail

Other (please specify)

5. How would you rate your satisfaction with the turnout of your organizations' events? Please explain in detail.

Very Dissatisfied
Dissatisfied
Indifferent
Satisfied
Very Satisfied

Other (please specify)

6. Which of the following committees are you a part of?

Comedy & Novelty
Concerts
Cultural Events
Historian
Publicity
Hospitality
N/A, I'm not a member of any committee
If you committee is not listed, please list it below.

7. Choose the following that best applies to your committee meetings:

Meetings run smoothly, cooperatively, and in a timely manner.
Meetings are productive, but can sometimes get off task
Meetings become social and are not always productive
Important tasks are not accomplished in meetings

Other (please specify)

8. Choose the following that best applies to your weekly Lancer Productions' meetings:

Meetings run smoothly, cooperatively, and in a timely manner.
Meetings are productive, but can sometimes get off task
Meetings become social and are not always productive
Important tasks are not accomplished in meetings

Other (please specify)

Motivation:

1. How effective do you feel the ice-breakers are at the start of the meetings?

Very Ineffective
Ineffective
Somewhat Effective
Effective
Very Effective

Explain

2. Make one suggestion to improve the quality of your weekly meetings.
3. Do you feel motivated by your executive board members to complete tasks successfully?

Yes
No
Sometimes

Other (please specify)

4. Choose the word that best describes the atmosphere of Lancer Productions or your interaction with it.

Unaccommodating
Stressful
Welcoming
Hostile
Cooperative
Accommodating
Cheerful
Helpful
Unhelpful

Other (please specify)

5. Do you feel that meetings are being held frequently enough to successfully execute the objectives of your organization?

Yes
No

Other (please specify)

6. Are you given an opportunity to adequately provide feedback about your organizations' functions?

Yes

No

Explain why or why not.

Demographics:

1. Please state your role within Lancer Productions

Executive Board Member

General Members

Other (please specify)

2. How long have you been a member of Lancer Productions?

Less than 1 year

1 year

2 years

3 years

4 years

Improvements:

1. Please state any improvements you think would benefit Lancer Productions.

End of Survey:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We would like to remind you that all responses will remain confidential and will be used solely for research purposes. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Meredith Scott at Meredith.scott@live.longwood.edu or Dr. Bill Stuart at stuartwd@longwood.edu.