



## p-TIPS

## Don't just talk (Communicate)

Everyone agrees that good communication in an enterprise is important in launching a new productivity initiative or sustaining an established one. It boosts morale, contributes to customer satisfaction, and smooths labor-management relations. But how can managers communicate most effectively to complement productivity efforts? The following tips were gleaned from a variety of sources:

- 1) Listen actively. Concentrate on the speaker's message and keep an open mind. Don't stop listening if you hear something that you disagree with. Rephrase the key points to ensure that you understand: "If I understand you correctly, you mean that...."
- 2) Watch your language. This not only means avoiding the offensive but also battlefield (kill the competition) or sports metaphors (let's bowl out Company X) that reinforce a win-lose rather than collaborative attitude. Clear, positive language delivered sincerely fosters shared understanding and group support.
- 3) Invite participation. Hold meetings that include employees from different areas and encourage contributions. Never ridicule a question and respond to all queries.
- 4) Be honest. Convey bad news as well as good. Don't be afraid to talk about

failures but create the feeling that failures are just part of organizational life. The only true failures are mistakes that are made over and over without learning from them.

- 5) Follow through. If a promise is made or an agreement reached, follow it up with action, even if the action ends up being an explanation of why the promise can't be kept in its original form.
- 6) Give positive feedback. Too many people forget that feedback can be positive as well as negative. Everyone in an enterprise realizes when a major project is successful, but note small things too, like who worked well together on a project, who stayed late in a deadline crunch, or who voluntarily took on extra responsibility, and single them out for praise.
- 7) Connect personally. Some employees are not in frequent contact with managers or each other. Occasional face-to-face interactions give more weight to subsequent telephone conversations, e-mail messages, or memos between meetings.
- 8) Apply externally. Finally, try to ensure that good within-enterprise communication is carried over to outside parties like customers and suppliers.