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ABSTRACT

A study examined upward-communication practices (from lower levels to higher levels in an organization) in American industry. Seventy-five large top-ranked companies responded to a survey concerning their upward-communication programs, for a response rate of 39%. Forty of the completed surveys included materials describing their upward-communication programs. Results indicated that: (1) the companies reported using an average of 6.6 upward communication practices; and (2) the three most common practices were suggestion programs, "open door' programs, and opinion surveys. Results further described 10 upward-communication practices, with some examples submitted by respondents, and compared upward-communication programs regarding the extent to which they handle grievances, suggest improvements, and provide feedback to the organization. Among the reasons to ensure good upward communication are that it provides feedback to management, it supplies early warning, it transmits unfiltered information, and it enhances organizational effectiveness. Findings suggest that the majority of large American firms use a wide variety of programs to foster upward communication from their employees. (Thirty-two references, a list of participating companies, the survey cover letter, a completed survey form, and company-provided materials describing the upward-communication programs of 16 companies are attached.) (RS)

Upward-communication Programs in American Industry

Allen I. Kraut
Baruch College, City University of New York

Frank H. Freeman
Center for Creative Leadership

PUTTING IDEAS INTO ACTION

A Center for Creative Leadership Technical Report

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INTRODUCTION

This paper reports the findings of a survey we conducted on upward-communication practices in American industry. It is intended for people who want to know more about organizational communication programs. In particular, it should be especially useful to managers and specialists interested in improving the communication processes in their organizations. In addition, researchers and behavioral scientists may also find merit in this data, the descriptions of the various programs, and the dimensions along which we evaluate them.

What is Upward Communication?

The lifeblood of effective organizations is good communication, and good communication is a two-way process. The issuance of orders and information by higher levels, or downward communication, is well controlled by management and is common fare in the literature of management, but it is only one part of the loop needed for the communication process to work.

Another part, upward communication, is less entrenched in organizational practice and writing, even though it is crucial to organizational effectiveness. Upward communication (from lower levels to higher levels) provides feedback about the clarity, understanding, and acceptance of downward communication. It also gives warning about new or unanticipated problems and concerns. It is a maxim in organizations that good news travels fast, whereas bad news goes much more slowly, if at all, especially if it is upward.

Our focus is not meant to deny the existence or importance of lateral communication. Such nonhierarchical exchanges are part of the totality of communication within all organizations and are critical in some organizations, such as those which use matrix management, self-directed work teams, various cross-functional management efforts, and task forces. New organizational structures seem to be increasing and may even be found in pockets within more traditional organizations where hierarchical forms of communication still predominate. We have chosen to focus on upward communication because it reflects the reality within which most organizations today are rooted and also reflects the fact that they operate under traditional guidelines, notwithstanding the remarkable changes underway.

Previous Research

Current knowledge on upward communication is spotty and incomplete. One of the best reviews of industrial practice is the work done more than a decade ago by Foulkes (1980) on practices in some twenty-six large non-union companies. Foulkes concluded that the companies he studied made extensive use of various upward-communication programs in order to stimulate feedback to management. Among the approaches he examines are attitude surveys, employee representative systems, employee meetings, executive interviews, person-to-person programs, question boxes, and formal complaint procedures. Among his most interesting findings, he notes:

> It is not only the variety of techniques that have been developed to accomplish the same purpose, but also that many companies will use several of these techniques simultaneously . . . ; the differences among the company approaches are interesting and significant to the companies but for the most part they are not fundamental. The important point is that the companies have strong communications programs . . . and that top management obtains feedback. (p. 261)

Other reports on this subject have appeared from time to time in various periodicals, but there is no well-organized body of literature on the topic of upward communication. What there is typically deals with issues of due process and handling of employee grievances. This focus has been hastened by recent court cases giving employees greater redress through the courts on issues of unlawful discharge, retribution after whistle blowing, and cases of bias or sexual harassment.

Although we will not present a complete review of this literature, a number of pertinent works will be cited here and throughout our report. Among these are the works of David Ewing (1977a), who surveyed 2,000 management-level subscribers to the *Harvard*

Business Review in 1971 and 1977 (for a 28% response rate). Asking about grievance procedures, he found 63% reported their firms have "a senior executive whose door is always open to employees who think they have been wronged." Only 11% mentioned the existence of a corporate Ombudsman or Ombudswoman. Ewing uses these results to discuss "what business thinks about employee rights," and has written a book entitled *Freedom Inside the Organization* (1977b). More recently, Ewing (1989) has detailed the methods used by fifteen non-union companies to resolve employee grievances.

With a similar set of questions, Krishnan (1975) surveyed 209 Midwestern executives and found similar proportions reporting such grievance channels. He also asked the executives to rate the effectiveness of these programs and learned, for example, the Open Door (reported by 55%) was rated high by 24% but low by 44%. The Ombuds program (reported by 8%) was rated high by 32% and low by 25%.

More recently, Rowe and Baker (1984) reviewed a number of alternatives available to non-union employees to have their complaints and concerns heard. Constructive alternatives are available, they argue, to protect the rights of employees and managers while dealing with conflicts and avoiding unconstructive solutions to their problems at work. They estimate that one-third of U.S. employers have developed new complaint systems, such as Hot Lines, Ombuds programs, and attitude surveys.

Many other articles related to upward communication are scattered in the literature and some will be mentioned later in the context of specific programs. Unfortunately there is no other recent, thorough accounting of current practice in this area. Thus, we are at some risk of being uninformed about the true state of current programs in upward communication.

Reasons for the Study

Considering the importance of this subject, a more comprehensive review of current practices seems desirable. Particularly as one reflects on the major transformations in American industry over the last decade, an inventory and understanding of upward-communication practices takes on some urgency. Many of these changes are obvious; some are not: The shifts in economic pressures include the forces of deregulation, global competition, and world-wide markets which require organizations to be more effective than ever; social changes include the desire of younger, better-educated workers to have more of a say in their work lives; legal changes also provide more outlets for employees who want to challenge management. Government and private lawyers are more than ever available to hear concerns about safety and health, bias in pay and promotions, unfair discharge, and recrimination for whistle-blowing.

METHODOLOGY

The survey reported on here was conducted from late 1987 to early 1988. Questionnaires (see Table 1, p. 6) were sent to a total of 191 selected large companies (all in the top 500, as ranked by *Forbes* magazine; see Appendix A (p. 55) for a listing of the companies that responded to the survey).

We started by developing a brief questionnaire which would refer to a variety of upward-communication programs. The programs were chosen using the following criteria: personal knowledge of the existence of certain well-defined programs and our examination of the literature for additional program types. After a review of the relevant literature, we defined these as programs with several characteristics: They were relatively formal, intended to stimulate and receive input from employees lower in the organization about their ideas and feelings on work-related issues (other than ongoing activity or status reports); and they provided management with the option to install and use or not to do so.

The result of this process was to obtain a list of eleven types of practices to use as the basis of our survey. As can be seen in Table 1, the research questionnaire lists and defines each practice. They include: Open-door Policies, Opinion Surveys, Suggestion Programs, Ombudsman Programs, Skip-level Interviews, Speak Out, Hot Lines, Advisory Boards, and several kinds of meetings (Question-and-answer Sessions, Regular or Monthly Meetings, and Department Meetings).

It may be useful to note some programs that we deliberately excluded as not meeting our criteria. Excluded are: formal grievance procedures covered by collective-bargaining agreements, because management often has little option on whether to use them; formal arbitration or mediation programs, sometimes used as an adjunct to collective bargaining agreements to handle grievances; Employee Assistance Programs designed to help individuals with personal problems which may or may not be work related such as substance abuse or emotional difficulties (because most EAPs are tightly bound by vows of confidentiality, they don't provide regular or reliable feedback to management); and managerial feedback instruments, because these are typically restricted to managers involved in training programs or are used sporadically.[1]

Table 1
Research Questionnaire

SURVEY OF UPWARD COMMUNICATION

Does your organization have (or use) any of the following programs?

1. OPEN DOOR (opportunity to appeal or speak to higher levels of management)

2. OPINION SURVEYS (regular polls of employee attitudes)

3. SUGGESTION PROGRAMS (where ideas are submitted to make improvements)

4. OMBUDSMAN (a mediator or representative to help resolve conflicts and disagreements)

5. SKIP-LEVEL INTERVIEWS (where executives meet with employees several levels below them)

6. SPEAK OUT (a confidential program to say "What's on Your Mind" and get a direct reply)

7. HOT LINES (a confidential program using telephones to respond to employee concerns)

8. ADVISORY BOARDS (employees, elected or appointed to a committee to give feedback and advice to top management)

9. QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSIONS (periodic meetings where employees can submit questions for discussion and reply)

10. REGULAR OR MONTHLY MEETINGS (scheduled meetings to provide information and answer questions)

11. DEPARTMENT MEETINGS (if different than above)

12. OTHER (please describe) ____________________

Note: See Appendix B-1 for a completed questionnaire.

We also omitted reference to the ongoing role of many personnel departments in this process through special units such as employee relations or employee communications groups; programs or personnel units devoted to single purposes such as those involving safety and health or equal opportunity practices; programs devoted to quality-circle efforts for improving work performance; or general programs such as "Quality of Worklife."

Another point worth noting is the exclusion of upward-communication practices among government and not-for-profit organizations. These often work in rather different environments, and including them in this survey would enormously complicate our task.

Once the questionnaire was complete, we undertook a search of the psychological and management literature to uncover articles on upward-communication practices and policy. The companies mentioned in these articles formed the nucleus of our sample. Large firms were chosen because their size leads to greater difficulty, obviously, in assuring high fidelity of communication, making them more likely to have formalized programs for upward communication. Also, larger firms often set the patterns emulated by many smaller companies. Moreover the practice would more likely be formalized and documented.

To this relatively small sample we added two other groups: (1) companies known by the authors to have an interest in employee-communication programs, and (2) companies written up in Dun's Business Month as being among the best-managed. The reasons for including this latter group is the presumption that good employee communication is a component of a well-managed company. There were 100 firms in this initial sample called Group A.

The questionnaire was sent to the human-resources director of each of our sample companies in Group A with a cover letter (see Appendix B, p. 56) explaining the rationale for the survey and asking for their help. The survey asked respondents to indicate, for each of eleven upward-communication programs (and one Other category), whether they did or did not use that program. The survey recipients were also asked to send materials describing the programs they had in place.

To bolster the number of returned surveys a second-round mailing was made to another group of companies (Group B) which consisted of 91 of the largest companies from the *Forbes* 500 list. As with Group A, the questionnaire was sent to the human-resources director with a cover letter. Also, some telephone interviews were conducted with both Groups A and B to elicit additional information and to follow up on items that were unclear in the questionnaire responses.

The overall response rate from the combined samples was 39%, with 75 of the 191 surveys completed and returned; 40 of the 75 included materials describing their upward-communication programs. Some follow-up contacts and anecdotal information received after the survey was done suggest the data remain valid today. Although a few companies have dropped programs, others have added them.

RESULTS

The overall frequency of practices used by the firms in our sample shows that the 75 companies responding reported using an average of 6.6 upward-communication practices. Of the wide range of programs reported by the respondents, the most popular programs are used by 81% and the least popular by only 25% (see Table 2).

Table 2
Frequency of Reported Upward-communication Practices

Practice	Number	Percent
Suggestion Programs	61	81
Open Door	61	81
Opinion Surveys	59	78
Department Meetings	51	68
Question-and-answer Sessions	50	66
Regular or Monthly Meetings	46	61
Skip-level Interviews	41	54
Speak Out	35	46
Advisory Boards	26	34
Other	24	32
Ombudsman	20	26
Hot Lines	19	25

The three most common practices, used by four out of every five companies, are Suggestion and Open-door Programs and Opinion Surveys. These are followed in popularity by the several forms of Employee-manager Meetings, used by two-thirds of our sample which include Department Meetings, Question-and-answer Sessions, and Regular or Monthly Meetings. About half the companies use Skip-level Interviews and Speak Out.

The other choices offered to our respondents are less popular. A third or fewer use Advisory Boards, Ombudsmen, or Hot Lines. A variety of Other practices are reported by 32% of the companies, but no single practice garners more than 10% in this category.

Before we move on to a more detailed examination of each of these programs, a few cautions are in order.

Cautions About the Data

More than half of the practices listed in the survey were reported to be in use by over 50% of the companies responding. The interpretation of this reported usage rate is difficult for the following reasons: In a simple yes or no response there is no indication of the robustness, frequency of use, or effectiveness of a program; many of the companies in the survey sample are large, highly decentralized organizations with many operating units. Programs may exist in some units and not others, and may operate effectively in some units and ineffectively in others. Some practices may be over-reported or under-reported because they are normally used only on an ad hoc issue-specific basis. Hot Lines seem to fall in this category and several companies mentioned this as an aside during telephone follow-up.

Program Descriptions

Each of the upward-communication practices will be reported in order of their popularity. The program and its particular purposes and virtues will be explained along with some examples of the materials submitted by the respondents (see Appendices). Important details and variations among programs will also be noted, including the appropriateness of individual programs in particular contexts and for particular outcomes.

Further, all of the programs will be compared on several dimensions which will include the extent to which the programs serve the following three critical functions: handling of grievances, suggesting improvements, and providing feedback to the organization. We will also consider how attractive the programs are to employees on several counts: their accessibility, safety, and credibility. In addition, we will consider their dependence on employee initiative, and the program's orientation to the individual versus the group.

The description of the programs along these dimensions, along with the details of their operation, should provide a good understanding of the pluses and minuses of each. A program which is appropriate for one purpose may be poor for another. A program which works well in a particular setting may be inappropriate for another. Some examples of the circumstances where the various programs may be of value will be given after they are all described.

Suggestion Programs. Suggestion Programs are a traditional form of upward communication. Even small organizations pay at least lip service to this program by having the requisite box with a slot for scrawled employee suggestions. The pervasiveness of Suggestion Programs is reflected in our survey by the fact that this practice, along with Open Door, was reported by 81% of the survey respondents—higher than for any of the other programs.

Suggestion Programs in large corporations, like those in our survey, are typically well structured and include guidelines, sample suggestions, and printed forms. They have also been used for a long time. The Walgreen Employee Suggestion System, for example, dates from 1940 and has processed more than 75,000 suggestions. Ford started its program in 1947, and today, suggestions earn employees more than $4.5 million in awards, and about 30% of these suggestions are adopted.

In essence, Suggestion Programs exist to elicit ideas from employees for making improvements, saving money, improving quality, or increasing income. Kodak simply states, "A suggestion is your idea to improve something" (see Appendix C, p. 58). Another company says in its handbook for employee suggestions, "A suggestion is a proposal to improve something in a specified manner."

Most companies pay the employee for the suggestion on a scale that increases with the judged value of the idea. The range of awards in our survey sample was $10 to $50,000. Of all the companies who sent documentation of their Suggestion Programs, only one has a program with no financial rewards—the reward in this case is a write-up in the company newsletter. Many of the companies grant awards for suggestions that lead to intangible benefits, such as improved company public relations. Usually the awards for these kind of suggestions are less than those for suggestions with an obvious savings or income potential.

Success stories about Suggestion Programs abound. Fritz (1988) reports that Daniel Miller, a customer service engineer for Unisys, developed a suggestion that will save his company an estimated $1.2 million over the next three years. Zemke (1981) describes a dramatic turnaround in a previously lackluster Suggestion Program at U.S. Gypsum Corporation. When the company enhanced the program with incentives and strong communication, the number of committee-approved suggestions went from seven or so per year to thousands.

Corporate guidelines for Suggestion Programs usually include the following elements: who is eligible; appropriate subject matter for suggestions (including examples of what is not appropriate); submission procedure; the nature of the evaluation process; and how awards are allocated. Items ineligible for suggestion plans typically include collective bargaining and grievance issues, matters already covered by company policy, legal issues, marketing or advertising ideas, and minor cosmetic improvements.

The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce uses a three-color brochure that illustrates many of the elements found in the programs for which we received information. The brochure covers eligibility requirements ("all employees and pensioners of the bank worldwide"), characteristics of valid suggestions ("identify a specific problem or opportunity"), guidelines to follow ("be submitted in writing on an IDEAS submission form"), and maximum award amounts. A nice touch in CIBC's descriptive brochure is a graphic flowchart of the progress of a suggestion through the system (see Appendix D, p. 59).

Some organizations have separate Suggestion Programs for exempt and nonexempt employees, with plan write-ups targeted for each group. A large manufacturer in our survey says this in its brochure for salaried employees: "Your good ideas help the company increase profits and stay ahead of the competition." For hourly employees the message is, "Whether it's sending your kids through college, taking a vacation, paying off bills, or beefing up your bank account, the Employee Suggestion Plan can make g[illegible] things happen to you."

Suggestion Programs are a common upward-communication tool, with a long history in U.S. companies. The generally well-established policies and clearly-designed forms make it easy for employees to understand and use this communication channel. Reflecting this long-standing interest in Suggestion Programs, The National Association of Suggestion Systems (230 North Michigan Ave., Suite 1200, Chicago, IL 60601), whose members are companies and government agencies, has been active since 1942. Most U.S. companies, however, have not yet reached the degree of employee involvement that the typical Japanese company Suggestion Program has reached. The Japan Human Relations Association (1988) reports, for example, that suggestions at Fuji Electric averaged ninety-nine suggestions per worker per year. In Japan, employee involvement in Suggestion Programs parallels the evolution of employee involvement overall through quality circles and total quality management.

Open Door. Open Door describes the policy of allowing employees to appeal or speak to higher levels of management. It provides an avenue for the handling of work-related problems which are not satisfactorily resolved through normal supervisor-subordinate discussion. Open Door was one of the most frequently cited programs, with over 80% of our sample companies reporting its use.

The degree of formality of Open-door policies varies widely between companies, some of which have numbered and dated policy statements that detail the company's Open-door policy (see Appendix E, p. 60). For others, the program is less formal, and is documented only by a sentence or two in the company's employee manual. Most often this program is called simply an Open-door Policy, but it does go by other names including "Employee Relations Procedure," "Problem Resolution Policy," or "Speak Easy." The description from IBM's *About Your Company* employee handbook is a good example (see Appendix F, p. 61).

Common to most Open-door programs in our sample group is the specification of steps that the employee should take to resolve a work-centered problem. Invariably the suggested first step is a discussion with one's supervisor. Typically the next step is a meeting with the supervisor's manager. At this point the options vary, but usually include discussions with one or more of the following:

an employee-relations representative, the human-resources manager, or someone further up the hierarchy. The policy statement in Appendix E outlines a typical sequence of appeal.

There are policy differences as to how far up the organization one may take an appeal, with some organizations specifying that the process may continue all the way to the CEO. On the other hand, most Open-door policies are alike in their inclusion of certain key features in the process. These include confidentiality, promptness of response at each step, and a promise of fairness.

The written Open-door policy statements received from our sample varied in the amount of procedural detail presented. PCS Worldwide (a division of McKesson Corporation) has a policy that is simply a published schedule of the times during which department heads and presidents have their doors open for discussion. Several companies have only a basic outline of steps in the problem-resolution process. Other companies, however, spell out the process in significant detail, specifying not only procedures for the employee to follow, but also detailing the responsibilities of the various interested parties. For example, the Open-door policy of a major insurance company in our sample includes the following directives:

- The business head is responsible for fully supporting the policy and making sure that it is properly implemented.
- The component's human-resources officer is charged with communicating the policy to managers and employees, providing managers and employees with guidance and assistance in resolving problems, conducting a thorough review and investigation of employee complaints, and maintaining confidential records of complaints.
- The manager is responsible for communicating the policy to employees and supporting its utilization, toward the end result of having the employee's complaint satisfactorily resolved.

This company also specifies procedures for conducting investigations of issues raised by employees and guidelines for documenting the entire Open-door process (see Appendix G, p. 62).

A large manufacturer in our sample even provides for the appointment and training of Open-door facilitators at all of its plant and office locations, as set forth in this message from the home office to divisional personnel directors: "You are asked to appoint a senior member of your personnel staff whose collateral function will be that of an Open-door facilitator at your location. . . ." This organization also spells out methods for handling employee claims of management reprisal and establishes tight timetables for responding to employee queries.

Refinements in the Open-door process are being fostered in many companies by internal and external forces according to Trisler (1984). Rapid corporate growth and increasing availability of external means for employees to address grievances is pressing firms to make their internal means for problem resolution faster and more credible. Companies are responding by formalizing and communicating more clearly to employees just how their Open-door programs work.

Naturally, there are some risks to Open-door programs. In addition to out-of-pocket expense for travel or time not worked by complainants, investigators, and witnesses, there is also dislike by managers who feel vulnerable to oversight or second-guessing. This feeling may be a useful deterrent to managers who may otherwise act arbitrarily or impulsively. On the other hand, there is the risk of system abuse by a small number of malcontents.

Employee concerns about retaliation for having lodged a complaint are also a risk. Many firms try to prevent such fears by stating that retribution is not acceptable, repeating this theme in management training, and being attentive to such complaints. In a detailed account of several Open-door programs, Ewing (1989) concludes that the advantages of such programs far outweigh their risks. Their role in providing due process for employee grievances seems to pay off, he says (citing anecdotal data), in higher morale, less attraction to unions, lower exposure to outside legal actions, and greater ability to attract and retain good employees.

Opinion Surveys. Employee Opinion Surveys seem an increasingly popular way of tapping employee attitudes, ideas, and suggestions in many companies. Indeed almost four out of five organizations use them. This estimate of survey use by 78% of our sample is considerably higher than found in a recent study by Delaney et al. (1988), perhaps because our sample included only the very largest corporations, ones most likely to have formal survey programs. The estimates of Delaney et al. are based on the responses from 495 U.S. business units, a 7% response rate from their mailed survey to 7,000 executives in 1986. Reported Opinion-survey usage ranged from a low of 38% among non-union clerical employees to a high of 51% for unionized professional and technical employees.

Having said that, however, one must note an incredible variety in the way surveys are done in various organizations. This variety, plus references to additional material covering all aspects of the attitude survey process, is represented in a somewhat dated but still useful bibliography by Margaret Blasingame of the Center for Creative Leadership (1981). Virtually all survey programs share the same purpose of sensing employee satisfaction and encouraging better two-way communications. Xerox states its survey:

> enables the company to measure its people's satisfaction and learn about their concerns with the Xerox work environment. The program provides a system and procedure through which management addresses areas of employee concern and by which employees have an opportunity to impact management decisions.

Similarly, another company's guide to Opinion Surveys describes five general objectives of their employee survey program: To help create an environment of participation, to provide survey-based action planning to meet business needs, to provide a stimulus for manager and employee development, to encourage communication and constructive comparison among organizational units, and to identify methods and practices that work and those that do not.

The typical Opinion Survey covers a wide array of subjects and will range from 50 to 150 closed-end questions asking for ratings of satisfaction. These items will generally cover feelings about the work, management, pay, benefits, physical conditions, opportunity, training, and so on. They may also cover issues of corporate climate, asking for descriptions of communications practices and clarity of work goals and procedures.

Most surveys will also have room for several open-ended questions, such as: "What do you like best about working for this company?" and "What do you like least?" Open-ended questions have the advantage of picking up issues and ideas that may not have been considered by the writers of the closed-end items. Employees' own words frequently catch nuances, offer specifics, and make powerful reading.

In many companies, there seem to be several sets of questions used: core items, which are asked of all employees, in all units, and are repeated year after year; local questions, added to reflect the interests of local management in major locations; functional questions, to inquire about issues of concern to certain types of employees—such as sales or service—on relevant issues, like training, product quality, etc.; and topical issues that change from year to year.

There appears to be increasingly greater use of items that go beyond employee satisfaction to social issues and organizational effectiveness. An insurance company in our survey reported that its annual survey recently "staked out new territory. For the first time, employees were questioned about such timely—and work-relevant—issues as AIDS, dependent care, and sexual harassment. They also were asked for suggestions on how to increase productivity in their work areas."

Frequency of Opinion Surveys seems to vary a great deal, even within companies. Some firms do annual surveys, although most seem to do their surveys between eighteen and twenty-four months apart. Still others do them only every three or four years or on an irregular basis.

Conversations with some firms suggest that Opinion Surveys work best when institutionalized on a regular schedule. This allows management and employees to become familiar with the survey process and deal with it as a normal practice. Despite this understanding, firms recognize some circumstances may require adjustment of survey plans. Thus, a reorganization or major business shift may be a valid reason for delaying or advancing a survey.

Opinion Surveys may tap the thoughts of a sample of employees or be a census of the entire population invited to take part. Most companies do one or the other and a few do both. The choice depends on the purpose to be served and how the data will be handled. A sample survey enables a relatively small number of people to represent a larger group, but it makes it difficult to zero in on a particular group or unit. This can be an important issue in trying to take corrective action. A sample survey also makes it difficult to report back findings to lower level units and have them take ownership of the data. For feedback purposes and pinning down the extent of concerns in specific units, though, a complete (or census) Opinion Survey seems best. Obviously it will require more resources, although there is no extra work in framing of issues or question writing.

By contrast with some other methods of upward communications, Opinion Surveys tap the ideas of an entire set of employees asked to take part and they do not require the employee to take the initiative. As a result there is usually a widespread employee interest in the process and the results. This interest puts a premium on feedback and action. It also requires survey responses to be handled in total confidence, with no employee being identified with his or her response. The promise of confidentiality must be made explicit and observed in all phases of the survey, such as the processing of write-in comments.

Firms experienced in employee Opinion Surveys recognize employee expectations may be raised. At a minimum, employees will expect management to report back the results and actions taken. Management must be prepared to do this and even to report why actions are not taken. A number of firms use company newspapers to report results to employees, and many others prepare special reports for lower-level unit managers for their groups. These managers, in turn, are expected to convey the results to their employees and to use the opportunity to discuss or develop appropriate actions in response to the surveys.

Training managers to do this feedback in unit meetings is often a part of the survey process. Occasionally, personnel representatives or facilitators will help in the actual feedback meetings. Many managers find such meetings taxing although it appears to be the key to morale management and improvement. In fact, such training of managers appears to be essential.

Feedback meetings are a key link in fostering good two-way communication. The Opinion Survey stimulates the initial upward communication by reporting results which provide the feedback necessary for a communication loop and supports easier communication in the future. Often the survey results are broken out by department or unit to tap the opinions of these subgroups. Usually the feedback will then include a report to the manager or supervisor of the individual unit which reflects the concerns and opinions of that unit, including how they feel about their manager (see Appendix H, p. 63).

The mechanical part of Opinion Surveys seems to have been greatly eased in recent years by computer-scoring and processing.

Many firms are helped initially by consultants to put together their survey programs. Organizations who do many or frequent surveys appear to build up their own staffs, although survey processing and reports may be done for them by vendors.

In any case, most firms start a survey process by getting top management committed to the process. This includes an education on the survey process, what is required, and what may come out of the procedure as well as a sense of the issues which management wants to know about. This step is often followed by small group interviews with employees to be sure the right issues are being tapped. Also, a good survey will be pretested to be sure the questions are clear and understandable. Distribution will also vary, with some firms favoring mail, and others, group administration.

Whatever the method, managers at all levels need to be aware of the program and to be in a position to support it. It is natural for many managers to be concerned about the impact of the results and how those results will affect their performance. These issues need to be dealt with early on.

Employee Opinion Surveys are a common upward-communication practice among the firms in our sample. By virtue of their visibility, they get a lot of attention throughout the organization and require the efforts of many people to be done well. At the same time, they have the potential for a broad positive impact.

Meetings. Meetings, of several kinds, are next in frequency reported. About two of every three companies in our sample report using Department Meetings (68%), Question-and-answer Sessions (66%), or Regular or Monthly Meetings (61%). Judging from our respondents' comments, many saw little distinction between these various forms of getting together with employees. Thus, some companies answered yes to two of the questions, although they had only one type of meeting. Other firms felt the three meetings were distinctly different and reported accordingly.

It is likely the two out of three ratio is an underestimate of the number of companies really using various meeting forms. Since nearly all firms use one or another of these kinds of meetings, in reality nearly all firms may be said to use meetings. Only two out of three, however, seem to see them explicitly as formal upward-communication practices. For similar reasons, we can believe no one of these meeting types is a pure one. There are, judging by our conversations with companies, many different types of Department Meetings even within any one firm.

So, recognizing the overlap among the various kinds of meetings and the diversity within any one type, it seems best to review meetings as one broad family of upward communication. In doing so we will note the essence of all meetings—the key aspects they share—and illustrate the diversity we find in how they are done.

In practice, communication meetings are not simply a technique for upward communication; they are a method for fostering better two-way communication. Higher-level management can both send and receive messages and this can raise clarity and understanding on both sides. Developing good two-way communication is far more important than the particular format of the meeting itself in the view of the companies using meetings. The program descriptions and policy statements of several companies illustrate this. Xerox states the purpose of its communications meetings is "to provide a forum for groups of employees to meet with management at (various) levels on topics of mutual interest. Meetings are conducted informally in a variety of ways and involve several levels of management." They may be held annually or more often; may be conducted at branch office or regional levels; and may involve all or a sample of employees. As seen in Appendix I (p. 64), such meetings are expected to provide employees a chance to get a better understanding of issues facing the company and to give management a chance to better understand the viewpoint, ideas, and suggestions of employees.

Similar themes are found in a Texas Instruments' (TI) corporate personnel manual on the subject of Department Meetings:

> It is TI policy to keep employees informed on matters affecting their jobs, their general welfare and that of the company . . . (and) to encourage the informal exchange of ideas and information relevant to the business.

Further, TI notes:

> Interest and involvement can be both encouraged and maintained by regularly held meetings of employees with the managers of their plant sites and/or managers of their organizational units. Properly conducted, such meetings should provide for a two-way exchange of information between TI

employees and their managers and should contribute to a working environment in which both individual and work-group questions can be answered, problems resolved, and conflicts minimized or eliminated.

Some companies provide guidance to managers on how to hold good department meetings. TI, for example, lists a set of suggested agenda topics, and a typical agenda for an hour-long meeting. TI also requests managers holding such meetings to complete a meeting report and forward it to personnel and higher-level management.

Merck is also a good example of a company with a clearly stated employee-communication policy and helpful guidance to managers. Merck states its philosophy as believing:

> effective two-way employee communications is essential to achieving its goals; therefore, it is committed to adequately informing employees about company policies and actions affecting them . . . and is committed to learn what employees know and think about its policies and actions. Whenever possible, the company prefers to communicate to employees through its supervisors and prefers that employees request and receive relevant information directly from their supervisors.

A program called "Face-to-Face Meetings" is used by Merck to carry out this philosophy. This program is "designed to open the channels of communication within the company and provide for a freer flow of information among the various levels of management and between managers and their people." Managers with eight or more employees are expected to hold such meetings at least three times a year.

To help Merck managers, a guidebook has been prepared to clarify the purpose of communication meetings, to tell how to conduct them, and to present meeting-leader skills, and related administrative issues. The type of skills expected of managers is illustrated by the "four basic rules of good communication: Always be candid, . . . be well prepared, . . . encourage participation, . . . listen, don't judge." The guidebook's table of contents is shown in Appendix J (p. 65).

The variety of meeting formats seems limited only by imagination. For example, McKesson has a descriptively titled "Breakfasts & Briefings Program" for managers, and a "President's Luncheon" held bimonthly with twelve individuals who represent a broad cross-section of California employees. They recently pilot-tested "McKesson on Location," a program to bring together managers from all locations in key cities across the United States.

These programs also serve as models for managers to emulate in their own units to further enhance two-way communications. McKesson states in a personnel handbook:

> Each of these programs is designed to accomplish three objectives: (1) to provide a forum for you to meet employees and to discuss the company's objectives and current activities; (2) to provide an opportunity for employees to ask questions and give feedback to senior management, and (3) to introduce key management employees from all divisions of McKesson to each other in order to encourage sharing of ideas and business opportunities.

Meetings tend to be more frequent at lower levels. Westinghouse reports most of its sites hold all-employee meetings followed by Question-and-answer Sessions at least once a year, with workplace meetings (regular informal meetings of a supervisor and employees) taking place monthly or more frequently.

A few organizations hold large, formal meetings of all employees or all of those at major sites. Run along the lines of stockholder meetings, these may be called "stakeholder" meetings. Generally, a report on the state of the business is given, and the opportunity for questions and answers is offered. Such state of the business meetings tend to be an annual affair. They display an interest in informing employees and can be well orchestrated but may be an awkward forum for most employees to voice their opinions.

Unlike some large formal programs, such as Suggestion Programs, communication meetings are infinitely flexible—in size, frequency, and format. Except for attendees' time and preparation (and perhaps travel), they are also inexpensive. This flexibility makes them ideal for easy application, although they are highly dependent on the leaders' skills. At lower levels of management, this may require preparatory training and coaching.

The value of such meetings to one CEO, Andrew Grove (1987) of Intel, has been described this way:

> At Intel we have a tradition of conducting a type of meeting we call "Open Forums." At these, a senior manager gives a brief talk to a large group of employees and then answers questions—all kinds of questions—for an hour or so. I conduct about a dozen Open Forums a year. The questions I need to deal with at these meetings test my knowledge of the affairs of the company, its divisions, and its plants as well as my integrity and managerial mettle. In many ways they remind me of the examination I had to pass before I was granted my Ph.D.—the infamous "qualifying exam." The large group of assembled employees collectively possess immense knowledge and a wide variety of interests. Facing their questions serves to hone my managerial capabilities as well as keep me reasonably humble.

Managers at all levels may also find the experience of being confronted by many employees to be a threatening experience. On the other hand, it increases the chance for good communication and for fewer issues to reach a boiling point without warning. Good communication meetings can also set the tone for employees to feel comfortable enough to come forward individually with their concerns. The employee who feels that the manager is really interested in what the employee thinks is more likely to come forward with things on his or her mind thus enhancing upward communication.

An example of the variety of meetings used comes also from a description of dinner meetings used by an executive at the AT&T Bell Laboratories (Moss, 1986). In 1984, thirty executive directors began to use semiannual meetings for Question-and-answer Sessions. One vice-president went beyond that mode to a series of informal dinner meetings with seven or eight junior staff members in a roundtable atmosphere. Follow-up showed very positive reaction from attendees in both formats.

Skip-level Interviews. A Skip-level Interview is a communication process designed to provide, via face-to-face meetings, direct feedback from rank-and-file employees to key executives. This upward-communication method is known by a variety of names, some of which are "Roundtable Meeting," "Listening Post Session," "Brown-bag Luncheon," "Deep-sensing Meeting," "Let's Talk," "Executive Interview Program," and "Two-ups." Slightly over half of our survey respondents reported using the Skip-level Interview in their overall program of upward communication.

In a few of our surveyed companies, Skip-level Interviews were an established part of the communication program. Where a formal program exists, the specifics of the process are usually spelled out in detail (see Appendix K, pp. 66-71). Generally included in the structuring of the program are guidelines for selecting the attendees, including the number of attendees, and the method of selection. Sometimes the selection of attendees is the responsibility of the employees' immediate supervisor. Other companies designate the local organization's personnel manager as the one who will select the attendees.

One variation noted in the Skip-level programs among our sample companies was whether the interview is a one-on-one meeting or is a group of employees meeting with the manager.

The one-on-one format is used by a major communications company: "The Skip-level Interview offers each employee the opportunity to meet with the member of management to whom the employee's immediate supervisor reports." Another company defines its group approach this way: "A Listening Post Session [is] designed as a two-to-three-hour interview where the President can interface with eight to ten rank-and-file employees." Whether group or individual, most Skip-level programs emphasize the importance of getting a cross-section of employees to participate, although the group-mode companies caution their management to avoid mixing exempt and nonexempt staff.

Skip-level Interviews are generally open to all topics, although using the session to air personal gripes is usually discouraged. The content and purpose of the interview is reflected in these statements by representatives of several companies in our sample:

> The key aim is for the top executive to listen; for him/her to get an accurate picture of "what it's like" to work here.

> The intent of the program is not to air personal gripes or have an employee go around the manager for problem resolution. Essentially, the intent is to give employees an opportu-

nity to communicate their ideas to upper management, while at the same time helping upper management to become more familiar with the people in the organization.

> The objectives of Roundtable Meetings are many and varied, but basically the meeting is just one communications tool—and an important one—designed to obtain firsthand feedback from employees on their problems and concerns and to elicit their ideas and suggestions for improving your operations.
>
> You may discuss anything you choose. You may have a problem or an idea, or perhaps you just need information. The individual who speaks to you is there to hear what you have to say and will be willing to review . . . policies or provide answers to your questions. Information that is not immediately available will be obtained for you by the interviewing manager. You may be asked for your views on subjects such as your job, your manager, or this company.

Employees who are selected for the meeting may be issued a written invitation which details the meeting time and place as well as the need to prepare for the meeting by seeking questions and topics for discussion from their co-workers. Sometimes the session will include the personnel or human-resources representative, there to field the inevitable questions about pay, benefits, and other personnel policies.

An interesting variant of this latter approach is one that schedules the first half of the meeting with just the personnel representative, whose job it is to warm-up the group and to get a summary from the group on the good things and bad things about the company—a mini Opinion Survey. In the second part of the session the top executive is briefed on the results by the personnel facilitator, with the participants clarifying issues when needed. For the target manager at these meetings, the communication mode is generally one of listening rather than talking. When questions are asked, the manager offers answers when he or she has the information or agrees to seek the answers elsewhere and then respond promptly.

By setting aside a specific time and place for communicating with a management person one or more levels above the employee, the Skip-level interviewing process elicits the views of those who might be too reticent to take the initiative themselves.

Skip-level Interviews are a way of life at companies like Wang Laboratories according to Christie (1984). Although managers who come from more formal management climates may be threatened by this method, most managers report that the program works well and provides positive and useful communication.

Speak Out. Nearly half of our respondents (46%) reported a written program of the type we call Speak Out. In such confidential two-way communication programs, an employee can write a question or comment on nearly any subject and get an answer from responsible management without the employee's identity being revealed to anyone but the program's administrator.

These programs are known by a wide variety of names, including "Dialog," "Between Us," "Comment," "Open Line," "Let's Talk," "Feedback," "Your View," "Intercom," and "Speak Up." Although many firms started these programs during the 1960s and 1970s, IBM's "Speak Up" program dates back to 1959.

The typical Speak-out program works in a remarkably straightforward way, beginning with self-mailing forms that are kept in readily accessible racks throughout the workplace: First, the employee fills out a form with his or her question, comment, or complaint and mails it (see Appendix L, p. 72); on receipt, the program coordinator assigns a code number to the form and removes the writer's name to keep the source confidential; the inquiry is retyped to avoid handwriting identification and forwarded to the person considered best qualified to answer it; the answer is then returned to the coordinator, who in turn sends it to the employee, usually at their home address.

To educate employees and clarify the procedure used, many of the Speak-out forms summarize the procedure used on the form itself. They also suggest conversations with the supervisor, checking the employee handbook, calling the department involved directly, and using the Suggestion Program as alternatives. In unionized companies where the program is used, the union employees may be reminded not to write in about issues covered by collective bargaining.

In part because of the ease of using Speak Out, a significant number of submissions are generated. One report states that most firms receive about 60 queries a year per 1,000 employees, or about 6%. Some 60% of these deal with personnel subjects, such as working conditions, pay and benefits, appraisals, promotion, and equal opportunity. Another 10% focus on company administration and communication. The remainder concern company policies and operations. One might expect that the subject of these queries can shift widely in response to important changes, such as smoking practices, downsizing, and retirement incentives.

Some companies will code the subject of inquiries by major category and distribute these reports to higher management to keep management tuned to the pulse of the work force, a major purpose of such programs. Of course, responsiveness to employees is also fostered by those answering the query. In one company, a tally showed about half could be answered at the local plant level, a quarter involved divisions, and a quarter required corporate-level responses. In many cases, the replies show direct action being taken in response to, for example, complaints about work assignments and transfers. In addition to providing direct answers to the Speak-out writers, many companies publish the queries of general interest and answers to them in company newspapers and bulletin board postings (writers are not identified). In this way, other employees who may have the same question or concern will have it answered.

Most companies in our sample took pains to point out that the writer's identity is kept confidential, and this seems key to the success of the program. In some companies Speak Out is not administered by the personnel or human-resources department but by communications or public-affairs staff. Although the personnel staffs may have access to the overall statistics and appropriate queries, the day-to-day conduct of the program is separated from normal personnel administration. This may also heighten the appearance of program confidentiality.

Also vital to the success of such programs are candid and thoughtful replies. In Pacific Bell's "Feedback Program," replies are accompanied by a reply postcard asking the feedback writer to rate the quality of the answer (see Appendix M, p. 74).

In many of these programs, employees have the option to request an interview with an appropriate manager. They also have the option to send in a query without signing it, although they are reminded that such anonymous missives cannot be answered directly.

Speak Out seems to be widely used, and its various programs are similar in operation despite a wide variety of names. They have a great advantage in being written and thus less subject to misunderstanding, forgetting, or not hearing than other forms of communication. Speak-out programs are also subject to relatively easy record-keeping and tracking. In order for them to be effective, though, they do require monitoring for prompt and frank responses plus a willingness by management to take corrective action where warranted.

Advisory Boards. This general term refers to a group made up of employees drawn from a variety of levels and organizational units. Advisory Boards were used by 34% of survey respondents. The purpose of the Advisory Board may be very general, dealing with a variety of employee/company issues and employee concerns, or the board may have a more circumscribed mission, such as advising employees on child-care issues. Typically the board has regular meetings (the frequency in our sample ranged from biweekly to bimonthly), and its members serve terms of one to three years. Periodically the board will make a report to top management, summarizing its reaction to, or recommendations for, an issue facing the company. Advisory Boards often go by a name that reflects the mandate of the group, such as "Employee Worklife Council," "Disability Awareness Council," "Human Relations Advisory Committee," "Dependent Care Awareness Council," and "Women's Business Resource Group."

The objectives of an Advisory Board are usually specific to the kind of issues it is chartered to consider. In general, however, Advisory Boards may take both a proactive and a reactive stance in meeting their objectives. Honeywell's Director of Human Resources summarized the proactive/reactive roles of the employee councils found in most of Honeywell's operating units this way: First, the council reacts to things happening in the company, thus giving top management needed feedback; second, the council develops and presents proposals on issues they think need consideration by senior management.

A major insurance company succinctly states that the goal of its Women's Advisory Group is to work with the CEO to advance the mutual interests of women and the company. This company has several similar groups that reflect ethnic or special interests. The

Walt Disney Company has an Advisory Board (see Appendix N, p. 75) which "acts not only as a liaison between employees, the university, and upper management, but also as a resource to employees with needed information, services, and company news."

Whether elected or appointed, one of the key membership criteria for Advisory Board members seems to be that, in aggregate, they represent a cross-section of the company with all major areas represented. One company's procedure for insuring broad-based representation involves the human-resource director contacting the head of an area where representation is needed (say engineering), and getting suggestions for members from that area head.

Sometimes the employees themselves are instigators of an Advisory Board for their organization. An article by Cohen and Knospe (1990) describes a "Professional Excellence Committee" that was formed by the technical staff within a DuPont research department. The authors spearheaded this effort, making sure that they got support from management, but also insuring that management representatives on the committee understood that they were there as colleagues, not as controllers of committee activity. The membership as a whole was chosen to be representative of the overall technical community at DuPont. Evaluating the activities of this committee the authors say:

> Overall, the contributions of the "Professional Excellence Committee" are valued by technical professionals as well as by members of management. The committee has proven to be very effective for getting some things done which otherwise would not have been done. The committee has also provided an opportunity for technical professionals to actively influence the operation of the organization to which they belong.

The method that Advisory Boards use to channel their proposals, opinions, and advice upward varies considerably. The Advisory Boards in a large food-products company take the formal approach of creating a written proposal which is sent to the VP of Human Resources. The human-resource director then presents the proposal to the CEO and top management. A more informal approach is taken by certain Honeywell operating units; their Employee Worklife Councils typically make their presentation orally and directly to top management. The upward-communication channel of the "Professional Excellence Committee" at DuPont is facilitated by having management representatives on the committee. Also, as management came to see the committee as a valuable resource, "the committee was asked to provide representatives to several committees and functions which had previously been 'management only' committees."

Ombudsman. A relatively new way to improve upward communication is an import from Sweden called the Ombuds program, personified by an individual called an Ombudsman. It first came to use in American industry during the 1960s (Ewing, 1977). Pronounced OM-buds-man, the word means intermediary in Swedish. Originally, it applied to government officials appointed to look into complaints made by citizens against public officials. Thus, one might understand it to mean a representative or advocate.

In some ways, the Ombudsman is akin to the American concept of an inspector general. David Bishop (1987), the Ombudsman for the *Ann Arbor News*, reports that forty publications in North America have appointed Ombudsmen, as have a number of universities (see Appendix O, p. 76). The role of the paper's Ombudsman is to act as an intermediary with readers, customers, and advertisers to improve the fairness, accuracy, and accountability of the newspaper. For universities, the role is to relate to the institution's staffs and students. Attesting to the strangeness of the word, Bishop notes that one of the first letters to him was addressed to the paper's "Omnibussman."

This practice is one of the least common means of upward communication among our sample companies, being reported by only one in four. It ranks lower in frequency than most of the other methods in our survey. Its actual use is probably even lower than reported, as some other programs not truly of an Ombudsman type may have been reported as equivalent. For example, in the telephone interviews some respondents felt their employee-relations representatives fulfilled such a function in addition to handling all other personnel practices and administration issues for a defined set of units. When this was the case, they were not counted as Ombudsmen unless the role of neutral advocate and intermediary was their major function. In some of the non-telephone reports, this distinction may not have been made.

In his article, *Improving Personnel Performance with an Employee Ombudsman*, Scherba (1986) describes a typical Ombudsman for a bank: A full-time position for a middle-level manager for about two years at a time, the Ombudsman has free access to all executives and employees who are encouraged to contact him if they are dissatisfied.

This Ombudsman takes a neutral stance in most cases, but if he "feels an injustice or an inequity is present [he] becomes the employee's advocate and aggressively seeks to right the wrong." All conversations with an employee are confidential unless the employee agrees to taking action on a concern. The bank feels employees and managers alike view the program favorably because it helps bring problems to light in an orderly fashion. The bank credits this program with a turnover rate far lower than average.

McDonald's, the enormously successful fast-food company, has had an Ombudsman program since 1975 to help resolve problems with its franchise owners and operators. The Ombudsman acts as an objective third party to disputes. The role is described as that of a "fact-finder, a conciliator, mediator, negotiator, counselor, listener or, in short, a resource for owner/operators with problems and concerns that do not seem to fit into the normal channels or department functions the Company provides."

At McDonald's, an individual in top management is assigned to the position of Ombudsman as a permanent function. This person, along with a small support staff, works with members of the owner/operator community who are selected on a case-by-case basis to work on problem resolution. These on-call volunteers are chosen from among owner/operators with several years experience and with profiles like the operator who brings a case forward. In addition, strong personal qualities are sought—in problem analysis, courage to speak out, and persuasiveness. Additionally, owner/operators are asked to act as Ombudsmen with their own employees, by taking employee issues seriously, getting all the facts, and telling employees what they've learned, concluded, and decided (see Appendix P, p. 77).

The importance of personal qualities is paramount in the choice of an Ombudsman as they usually have no formal power. Their influence comes largely from expertise in the system and in their objectivity, much of it exercised by discussion, listening, explanation, and persuasion. This is shown in IBM's Ombudsman-like

"Resident Manager Program." A dozen resident managers, located in major cities around the United States who serve the surrounding region, are chosen from among the most experienced and respected executives. Traveling in their designated areas, they hear employee comments and complaints, resolving many of these through discussion. Because of their knowledge and history, the resident managers are able to solve many problems despite a lack of formal authority.

Activities similar to an Ombudsman's are occasionally found in other roles. For example, in Southland's "Search for Solutions Program," the liaison coordinator who normally deals with the written "Open Line Program" may talk to several parties involved in an employee's complaint to be sure that clear communication is taking place and appropriate actions are being taken.

Employee Assistance Programs may also shade over into Ombudsman-like activities. Control Data uses and offers to others its EAR program (a registered trademark for Employee Advisory Resources). Work-related problems may be coordinated with a designated company resource, and the program encourages employees to resolve volatile issues within the company's structure.

An excellent analysis of the corporate Ombudsman function is presented by Rowe (1987) who points out the need to deal with employees' emotions and feelings, be able to give and receive information on a one-to-one basis, and even counsel employees and managers to help work out their own solutions. A related study by Robbins and Deane (1986) shows this role is a delicate one as it requires confidential and informal help to employees outside of normal management channels. The primary goal is fairness and problem resolution to which end the Ombudsman uses a variety of counseling, mediation, coaching, and conciliation methods.

The actual use of Ombudsmen in our society may be larger than is suggested by our data, as a large number of governmental agencies and some universities have created such roles and have appointed individuals to fill them. Many are members of the United States Association of Ombudsmen. In addition, there is a Corporate Ombudsman Association, which recently compiled the *Ombudsman Handbook* (1988), detailing all facets of an Ombudsman operation in a corporate setting.

Ombudsman programs, though not in frequent use, seem to be an effective way to deal with issues that have or may soon become significant problems. The personal qualities required appear to be good communication skills and a high degree of personal prestige. Obviously, it is a labor-intensive program but one that is a highly visible show of management commitment to upward communication and problem resolution.

Hot Lines. A corporate Hot Line uses the telephone to provide confidential answers to employee concerns. Corporate names for this kind of program include "Open-Line," "PIPEline," and "Dial-Info." Hot Lines are a close relative of confidential Speak-out programs with the added feature that the employee may get a response without revealing their name to anyone, including the person staffing the Hot Line phone. In contrast, getting an answer from a mail-in Speak-out service usually means that the employee must provide identification to at least the Speak-out coordinator.

Telephone Hot Lines provide the additional benefit of rapid response. The ease of use provided by a telephone service, along with the benefits of quick response and anonymity, offer at least the potential for eliciting candid and timely questions about issues and concerns that may be brewing at lower levels of the corporation.

With this potential, it is somewhat surprising that Hot-line programs were in place at only 25% of the companies responding to our survey. This is lower than any other reported upward-communication practice. The reason for this may have more to do with the mechanics of operating a Hot-line program than blindness to the potential usefulness. Staffing a general-purpose Hot Line that must field a wide spectrum of questions and concerns could be a significant barrier to making such a program workable. Although a written-communication program like Speak-out allows time for the liaison to tap into various corporate sources for the needed information, the immediacy of a Hot-line service permits no such luxury.

A number of survey respondents who indicated that they did not have a general-purpose Hot Line did note that their organization often had special-purpose Hot Lines. A consumer products company, for example, set up a special line during a crisis period, giving its employees access to the latest developments as the crisis progressed. Similarly, an organization that was dealing with the trauma of significant downsizing provided a Hot Line for questions related to this.

General Dynamics promotes three special-purpose Hot Lines for employee use (see Appendix Q, p. 78). In common with other firms that are large government contractors, they post Department of Defense (DOD) Hot-line numbers as required. These numbers are available to report fraud, waste, and security violations relating to DOD contracts. General Dynamics also has its own Hot Lines, one for ethics questions and concerns and another for personnel issues.

Interestingly, Hot Lines can be a channel for downward communication in addition to their primary function as an upward-communication practice. Edwards and Bennett (1987) note that of the 3,646 ethics communications received within General Dynamics in 1986, "more than two-thirds were not allegations of misconduct, but rather calls to ask questions or seek advice about proper conduct."

Several companies reported Hot Lines for personnel matters or Employee Assistance Programs (EAP). In the case of EAPs, the Hot Line often serves as a referral service, putting the caller in contact with the internal program or community agency best able to deal with the problem. Manufacturers Hanover Trust describes their Hot Line this way:

> PIPEline is a telephone referral service that evaluates and aids in the resolution of a caller's problem by putting the staff member in touch with professional help. The service is intended to provide information and assistance that is beyond the scope of the supervisor's time and expertise (see Appendix R, p. 79).

Although Hot Lines were the upward-communication practice with the lowest reported usage among the companies in our sur y, there is some evidence of increasing usage among compa- that are already using Hot Lines. A Conference Board survey , 1988) of employee communication reported that "the majority c ..ins with employee hot lines said their use has remained steady over the past few years, but 40% reported expanded use, while 7% reported a decrease" (p. 34).

Other. As might be expected, this category holds several different programs. Altogether, 32% of our sample volunteered one or another of several programs being used. No one program was mentioned by more than 10% of the respondents.

One of the popular mentions was so-called "Sensing Sessions," basically group interviews centered on one or more themes or issues. Others used the term "Focus Groups" to describe a similar approach. Sometimes these seemed very informal and unstructured, while at other times they focused on a particular subject. "Sensing Sessions" and "Focus Groups" may be seen as a special kind of employee meeting, one run by staff specialists. Occasionally they may be used as an adjunct to an Opinion Survey to add depth, meaning, or suggest actions in response to survey findings.

A few companies mentioned specially structured management-training experiences as a form of upward communication. This occurs in courses where attendees meet with higher-level managers and have the chance to share ideas and discussion with their executives.

A very few companies chose the Other category to cite a variety of practices not listed in the survey questionnaire, namely, "Task Forces," "Ad Hoc Special Work Groups," "Quality Circles," and interfacing with various forms of personnel counselors or representatives. These practices were not mentioned by most companies, but may actually be used by many of them.

Comparison of Programs

We now wish to compare the large variety of programs reviewed in the preceding pages (see Table 3, p. 36).

The features of the various programs as represented by the dimensions outlined in Table 3 translate into program advantages or disadvantages depending on the needs or circumstances of the organization. What is the plus of a program for one purpose or company can be a minus for a different purpose or company.

Table 3 also describes the function of various upward-communication programs and provides ratings of each program's attractiveness, its need for employee or management initiative, and its individual or group orientation. The ratings are our judgments based on reading the program descriptions, talking to firms using them, and reviewing the accounts of researchers such as Foulkes (1980) and Ewing (1989). These evaluations are meant to describe the typical program in operation. Any particular program may have its idiosyncratic features and may be run more or less well in some

Table 3

Comparison of Upward-communication Programs

PROGRAM	Handle Grievances	Suggest Improvements	Feedback to Organization	Access	Safe	Credible		
	ASPECT OF PROGRAM							
	(A) FUNCTION			(B) ATTRACTIVENESS			(C) INITIATIVE	(D) ORIENTATION
Suggestion	Low	High	Low	High	Mid	Mid	Employee	Individual
Open Door	High	Low	Low	High	Mid	High	Employee	Individual
Opinion Surveys	Mid	Low	High	Low	High	High	Management	Group
Employee-management Meetings	Mid	Mid	High	Mid	Low	Low	Management	Group
Skip-level Interviews	Mid	Mid	High	Low	Mid	Mid	Management	Mix
Speak Out	Mid	Mid	High	High	High	High	Employee	Individual
Advisory Boards	Low	Mid	High	Low	Low	Mid	Management	Group
Ombudsman	High	Low	Low	High	High	High	Employee	Individual
Hot Lines	Mid	Low	High	High	High	High	Employee	Individual

NOTE: High = Major Aspect of Program; Mid = Partial Aspect of Program; Low = Minor or Not an Aspect of Program particular aspect. Nevertheless, the ratings may be helpful in picking out when and where a particular program will serve best.

Below, the four dimensions used in Table 3—Function, Attractiveness, Initiative, and Orientation—are described in more detail.

Function. A key issue in looking at all the programs is to have a clear idea of the essential purpose of the program. Although all are upward-communication programs, they seem to vary widely in the kinds of issues communicated and the purpose they serve. Thus, one can see three central functions of the programs already described. These are: handling grievances, suggesting improvements, and providing feedback to management. The function of each program, in terms of the kinds of issues communicated, is shown in Table 3.

Based on a reading of the typical programs in each category, a judgment was made as to the essential purpose of each program, and each of the three possible functions is shown in the first three rows, as having a "high" (major), "mid" (partial), or "low" (minor or absent) role in a given program. This rating is our assessment of the purpose or goal served by the program. The actual achievement or success of the program may vary considerably from firm to firm.

Handling grievances is thus seen as the major function of the Open-door and Ombudsman practices and a minor function for Suggestion Plans or Advisory Boards. Suggesting improvements is the major function of Suggestion Programs and a minor feature of several others. Providing feedback to the organization on a variety of possible issues is the major function of Opinion Surveys and Skip-level Interviews, among other programs. It is served only to a minor degree by programs like the Suggestion Programs or Open Door.

Attractiveness. The attractiveness of these programs to employees, according to Aram and Salipante (1981) can be judged by looking at four criteria: ease of use, timeliness, protection from recrimination, and fairness of settlement.

- Ease of use. How simple is it for employees to use and follow through with? Programs that are always available and relatively informal would get high marks on this dimension.

- Timeliness. Related to ease of use, this criterion holds out the promise of a quick response and resolution.

- Protection from recrimination. The fear that one will get hurt later for complaining or asking critical questions may keep people from using a program. Confidentiality, or even anonymity, can be seen as protecting people from recrimination.

- Fairness of settlement. This criterion refers to the equity of the solutions coming out of a process and the perception that it is conducted fairly. This is sometimes difficult to judge, as fairness may not be intrinsic to a program but depends on a procedural formality, impartial decision making, and a strong awareness of due process issues.

Another view of the Attractiveness of programs for upward communication has been offered by Rowe and Baker (1984). They list three aspects as essential to success in hearing employee concerns. These three aspects are used to rate each of the programs (the ratings are shown in Table 3). Below is an explanation of categories and how they are related to the four criteria outlined by Aram and Salipante (1981).

- Accessibility to easily used systems is akin to the ease-of-use criteria, and perhaps also overlaps with a concern for timeliness. In our judgment, practices such as Speak Out and Ombudsman are very accessible and Advisory Boards much less so. Other ratings are shown in Table 3.

- Safety, in terms of anonymity and confidentiality, includes features which are said to encourage the raising of concerns without fear of reprisal. This bears directly on the concern for protection from recrimination. Thus Hot Lines are patently safe, whereas the safety of Open Door may vary considerably from firm to firm. Management-run meetings, being open to public view, would appear more risky.

- Credibility is the third aspect and seems to be associated with being out of the normal line of management channels. Thus, Ombudsman would be relatively high in credibility and Employee-manager Meetings the least so. This criterion is to a high degree associated with the fairness-of-settlement concern raised earlier.

Initiative. The matter of employee initiative in the use of a program is also a key consideration and is expressed in Table 3 by listing either the manager or employee as the initiator of the program. (Although initiative may overlap with ease of use, it is not the same. An Opinion Survey, for example, is easy to use but it is offered at management's initiative and not the employee's.) Who must take the initiative to make use of the program once it is set up is a major dimension for comparing the programs to one another. For example, the Suggestion Program and Open Door can both be accessed by employees at will, whereas an Opinion Survey or an Employee-management Meeting must be set in motion by management. In some ways, this is related to the issue of timeliness, as a program that allows employees to take the initiative is more likely to permit its timely use.

Orientation. The orientation to individual or group treatment is also a worthwhile dimension. Open Door and Suggestion Programs are easily used by and aimed at the individual. Typically, Opinion Surveys and Employee-manager Meetings are oriented to group administration and considerations. To a large degree, programs oriented to the individual also put a premium on individual initiative. But there can be exceptions, notably in Skip-level Interviews, which may take place with one or a group of subordinates but are invariably scheduled by management who usually select which individuals to interview.

Quality. Rowe and Baker (1984) also point out some qualitative features any innovative system must have if it is to be effective. (These are worthwhile aspects to keep in mind, but are not used to rate the programs we have covered here as they can vary so widely from firm to firm.) The five features they see as standing out in effective programs to handle complaints are: personal communication with employees to share and give information; confidential advice and counseling to employees on ways to resolve their concerns; investigation, conciliation, and mediation aimed at dispute resolution rather than adjudication; adjudication, where necessary to provide a binding conclusion while ensuring due process; upward feedback to higher management about the extent and types of issues being handled by the program.

DISCUSSION

Benefits of Upward Communication

There are several reasons to want to ensure good upward communication in organizations: It provides feedback to management, supplies an early warning system which helps deflect problems, transmits unfiltered information, enhances organizational effectiveness, helps to handle grievances, checks arbitrary supervisors, and shows management concern.

It Provides Feedback to Management. One-way communication—through speeches, annual reports, bulletin boards, or even letters—are just that—one-way. It is hard to know how well they are understood and whether appropriate responses will be made. Without a two-way process in operation, management may not really understand how its message came across. Upward communication can provide feedback on those issues. If done in conversational form, questions can be asked and answered, misunderstandings clarified, and objections heard and taken into account. Other forms of response can give management a clue to any major reactions, positive or negative. Without some definitive response, management may well be incurring unwelcome surprises.

It Supplies Early Warning. It is easier to deal with problems before they become too widespread or severe. Effective upward communication can provide early warnings and allow changes to be made on a timely basis before lengthy or difficult revisions are needed. Even mildly unpleasant news is more irksome if it comes as a surprise. Management needs to get prompt reports from the front lines.

It Transmits Unfiltered Information. Especially in large organizations, information goes through several layers as it proceeds upward. This slows the process and, more importantly, filters the data. Negative news tends to get filtered much more than positive news. Thus, higher management often has a distorted and incomplete picture of what is really going on in the organization. (Some of the newer, less traditionally hierarchical forms of organization may be less subject to information filtering. Thus, cross-functional teams, matrix-managed units, and quality circles, for example, are likely to transmit data more quickly and accurately.)

In most large organizations, appropriate programs may discourage or provide a check against such filtering. Accurate data also helps to assess the degree of discontent that may exist; are the complainers merely isolated cases or just the tip of an iceberg?

It Enhances Organizational Effectiveness. Effective performance depends on a clear understanding of goals, appropriate training and tools, and motivation, among other things. A clear understanding can't always be assumed and must be checked. Even when goals are well understood, the means for achieving them may be improved by harnessing the ideas and suggestions of people at all levels in the organization. Of course there are some processes, such as the total-quality management approach and the strategic planning processes used by many Japanese companies, which try to stimulate and gather helpful inputs.

It Helps to Handle Grievances. With less than one in five workers represented by unions, most employees' grievances are not handled by collective bargaining agreements, and alternative systems are needed. Most employees expect some appeal process if they cannot work out a serious issue with their immediate supervisors. Due process is so taken for granted in American society that employees frustrated in the workplace are increasingly turning to the government and private attorneys for redress. Many employers may prefer to build into their organizations the mechanisms that allow a more controlled, speedier response to dealing with employees who feel wronged.

It Checks Arbitrary Supervisors. Programs which can potentially expose arbitrary or wrong decisions may act as a check on supervisors, causing them to think twice about their actions. The possibility of review will often force supervisors to reason out their decisions and, hopefully, promote a greater consideration and balancing of employee needs against business needs. In a sense, upward-communication programs also perform an audit function on the state of employee-supervisory relationships.

It Shows Management Concern. Among the most important consequences of any upward-communication program is the message sent to employees about management's attitude about people in the organization. The symbolic effect of any program cannot be ignored! Asking people for their opinion gives honor and credit to them. Not asking does the reverse.

Equally important to such programs is the use of the data garnered. Management must act as well as ask. To ask is to set up the expectation of action. The actions taken also show how management feels about the people in the company. If management does not respond or takes inappropriate (or weak) actions, employees may become more dissatisfied, even cynical, and turn against the communication program. Foulkes (1980) states that reasons like those noted above may all have the basic aim of enhancing "employees' trust and confidence in management" (p. 260).

Observing management action in response to upward communication may well be the most essential ingredient to a successful program. This is likely the reason for the astounding success of certain customer Suggestion Programs in the retail industry. Management at Stew Leonard's store in Norwalk, Connecticut, for example, cherishes customer complaints (Barrier, 1991) because they are the stimulus to take visible corrective action. When the customers see the results of their feedback they likewise feel cherished, and the communication loop is complete.

What Program(s) to Use

It seems reasonable to ask, "Under what conditions might these programs best be used?" In reality, there are a myriad of considerations, including organizational size, history, environment, resources, and management competence. Although there may be no hard and fast rules, we'd like to explore a number of factors that might be taken into account. A place to start is with the program characteristics themselves.

A partial answer to the question of what program to use is found by looking at the functions played by each program as listed in Table 3. Thus, if a firm is most interested in handling grievances, resolving disputes, or providing an appeals route to insure due process, it should look to an Ombudsman program or a formal Open-door approach. By contrast, a Suggestion Program would be a poor choice to fulfill such goals.

Program characteristics may be only a small piece of the puzzle. In many cases, it may be characteristics of the firm itself, such as size, which dictate the best choice. For example, smaller firms are likely to find it much easier to install Skip-level Interviews or Employee-manager Meetings throughout the organization than to use an Opinion Survey process or a Suggestion Program. Such meetings, depending on just a few competent executives, have very small start-up costs. In many firms, in fact, it was the founder who set the pattern for such meetings when the firm was still small. Such events help to establish the organizational climate. Start-up firms and newly organized units may find such meetings to be of special value. A caution is that high levels of management competence are needed for the programs just described. For success they depend heavily on interpersonal skills to engage others face to face.

Advisory Boards are also relatively easy to set up, partly because they involve a relatively small and select sample. How people are chosen and how long they stay on the board may become an issue especially for those not chosen.

Qualitatively different from Employee-manager Meetings, the more formal Opinion Survey and Suggestion Programs take more professional effort and expertise to install and conduct. Additional resources in staff or consultants are needed. The resources to extend these methods to multiple sites, however, is only a bit more than what is needed to use them in one location. The principal costs, in time, money, and energy, are in the initial design and implementation. Economies of scale are significant. On the other hand, extending Skip-level Interviews or Employee-manager Meetings to other units will increase expenses at an arithmetic rate. Twice as many meetings will cost twice as much. (Moreover, as previously noted, they require a skilled management cadre to run effectively.)

A large or far-flung organization will typically have many layers of management or other impediments that may hinder accurate upward communication. Such firms may actually find an Opinion Survey very attractive for its virtue of covering many employees with the same questions at the same time. The process may be reminiscent of an annual health examination and implies a similar preventive organizational health perspective.

Opinion Surveys also play a particularly prominent educational and symbolic role. The choice of questions sends a message about the issues that management feels are important to check on and to work on. Further, after an Opinion Survey process is already in place, it can be used to emphasize changes in management direction, such as moving beyond questions of morale to issues of quality, innovation, and customer satisfaction. Naturally, how management shares the data and responds to the findings also sends a very powerful message. Opinion Surveys can play a key role in communicating the organization's strategic business objectives.

Opinion Surveys may seem deceptively easy, especially when they are well done. In fact, they require that managers at all levels understand the process and be prepared to hold feedback and problem-solving meetings with employees. This method requires an investment in training managers as well as setting up the organizational infrastructure to deal with the survey process.

Like Opinion Surveys, Speak Outs provide written inputs, which can then be shared with appropriate managers throughout a large organization. Such programs make it easy to capture concerns that management may not even have considered. Unlike the predetermined questions of a survey, the blank forms used in Speak-out programs allow any issue to be raised. No wonder some are titled, "What's on Your Mind?"

Organizational stability is another major consideration in deciding which upward-communication programs will be most effective. Firms undergoing change face enormous demands for good communication. The more rapid the change, the more important it is to communicate well and accurately and to get feedback on how the change is playing out. This is especially true in a crisis. Intense short-term change requires dealing with a lot of fast-changing information for a relatively brief period.

For such a situation in a large unit, the ease and rapidity of setting up telephone Hot Lines is very attractive. This program also permits two-way dialogue to clarify issues and provide quick replies. Examples of where a telephone Hot Line may prove invaluable would include dealing with unusual safety concerns, impending layoffs, merger and acquisitions, relocations, benefit plan changes, and similar unusual events.

In such threatening and fluid situations, it is important to make it easy for people to state their concerns and reactions. Assuming that each caller may be voicing concerns shared by others, appropriate responses may also be repeated to management and put on bulletin boards for wider dissemination. The telephone Hot Line can be staffed on an ad hoc basis and discontinued when no longer needed.

In smaller organizations, frequent Employee-manager Meetings may be more feasible. This is most likely to be a better choice if all are united in pursuing a common goal, such as when devising a new product to meet a competitive challenge, or handling a product defect or liability issue. Organizational stability, of course, may be affected by internal or external dynamics.

The organization's history of employee-management relations, and the competence of its management may also influence the feasibility of various upward-communication programs. Low levels of trust and confidence make programs such as Speak Out and telephone Hot Lines, which maintain anonymity, more likely to be acceptable to most employees. The visibility of individuals in Employee-management Meetings may make employees hesitant to speak freely, and ironically managers may at the same time fear such meetings lest they be exposed to open hostility. Of course, for new and courageous managers, such meetings have the potential to dramatically mark a change in customary ways of behaving.

Firms planning to use any of the upward-communication programs we have reviewed must consider what programs are already in place (most organizations in our sample report they use six or more programs). For example, over time and with growth, Open Door, initially useful to a firm's founder, may need to be supplemented with other programs such as Speak Out. The existing climate in an organization will be more hospitable to the introduction of some of these programs than to others. Sometimes, though, a nonobvious choice should be selected in order to make a statement.

Whatever program is selected, the key to its success is how management uses the results! Actions which are meaningful and responsive to the issues raised by employees will mark the program as successful. If employee inputs are handled seriously, quickly, and appropriately, then participants will judge the program as useful to raise and resolve current and potential problems. If management stonewalls, ignores, or bumbles its responses, the program may embarrass and disable them. Based on the anecdotes shared with us, the effectiveness of upward-communication programs depends largely on how well management uses the process and the data it produces.

Going Beyond This Sample

This study relies on large American companies and the type of employees typically found there. But the workforce is changing, and will grow mainly through the acquisition of more immigrants, women, and minorities (Johnston & Packer, 1987). Will these programs work equally well with them? Probably yes. Such people are employed by companies in our sample and none of the materials we reviewed point to problems in conducting upward-communication programs with them. Yet, it seems foolish to take for granted that different kinds of workers will automatically accept such programs to the same degree as prior workforces. Companies would be well advised to explain and sell any new communications programs.

An existing problem, unattended to in the materials we obtained, is how one deals with employees who have low levels of literacy or whose English-language skills are limited. In some settings, it may be necessary to use Spanish or other non-English-language communications. "Personal readers" (for example, to fill out surveys) may be used to overcome literacy barriers if handled with sensitivity.

Internationally some of these techniques are likely to work well and others not. Opinion Surveys, for example, are common in many other countries, especially those in Northern Europe, but are less popular and may even be considered counter-culture in Southern Europe. Public questioning of management and truly open discussions may be seen as rude, disrespectful, and inappropriate in many countries around the world. No generalizations can be safely made, other than to look at each program in a particular country to see how well it fits. Local management and current practices will often be good guides.

Forces other than employee diversity and company globalization may influence the relative effectiveness of upward-communication programs. Kanter and Mirvis (1989) have documented the increasing cynicism of Americans and how that tendency has infiltrated the workplace. This air of disillusionment naturally affects worker receptivity to downward communication, but it also presumably affects employee receptivity to, and use of, upward-communication programs. Thus, the specific programs that a company implements and the way they are implemented should take into account the degree and focus of employee cynicism within the organizations.

Lastly, some of these programs are already being supplemented, perhaps to be replaced eventually by other forms of communication that make upward communication less of an issue. The most notable are those programs running under the rubric of quality management or customer satisfaction efforts. The bottom-up and top-down communication and decision making seen in Japanese companies such as Komatsu (Haley, 1985) are woven into the strategic-planning process and typify the two-way communication possibilities inherent in these new programs and structures.

Often using group meetings, these efforts bring together employees and management in intense dialogues about how the organization is operating. Starting with discussion of who the customer is and what they need to measurements of how well the unit is satisfying those needs and using customer feedback to improve the work process and plan new products and services, such efforts may prove very useful to organizational functioning and satisfy many of the needs currently addressed by the upward-communication practices reviewed above.

Rich with clever problem-solving methods and utilizing skills for team building and group facilitation, these approaches may provide inspiration and models for application to internal human-resource management in the future.

CONCLUSION

Most organizations today are experiencing vast changes (and pressures to change even more in the future) which put a premium on maintaining meaningful communication systems. Against this backdrop of economic, social, technological, and legal shifts, effective programs to stimulate and maintain upward communication are likely to promote more effective and satisfying organizations. As we have seen, such programs can stimulate ideas for better performance and the solving of many problems. They can yield feedback on employee reactions to management actions. If done well, such programs help organizations to gauge the extent of issues on employees' minds, and can help distinguish between a groundswell of opinion and an occasional squeaky wheel. They can provide a number of internal channels for dealing with employee complaints and grievances, perhaps putting off the need to use external outlets.

Most American firms today recognize the importance of effective day-to-day communication in their organization and entrust the management system with this function. In fact, the key half of good communication is listening, a process which must be cultivated as part of a company's complete management system according to General Electric's Douglas Curley (1979). He notes the role of upward-communication programs like those described above as "alternative stimulators" to encourage upward communication. They are valuable supplements to any ongoing management system to ensure the completion of meaningful communication loops.

In our survey we did not ask companies for information on the effectiveness of the programs they were using. Undoubtedly, their effectiveness varies from firm to firm. Just as surely, it should be possible for an organization to judge a program's workings by employee and management evaluations, degree of use, resolution of cases, and other criteria applicable to most personnel programs.

Although such programs are thought to improve employee morale, avoid litigation, and build employee loyalty, no evidence directly links them to improved financial performance. This is an important, if unresolved, question. Developing and implementing upward communication does require management to commit energy, time, and resources for policy formulation, publication, training, and reporting. Such programs don't necessarily improve earnings and profitability, but the companies that have them are generally above-average performers (Ewing, 1989).

Many experts believe that the competitive edge will go to companies most effective at harnessing the ideas and the motivation of their employees. The use of effective programs for upward communication sends a message that employees' ideas and reactions are an important, welcome part of the business. It also confirms a respect for each individual.

The results of this study show that the majority of large American firms use a wide variety of programs to foster and encourage upward communication from their employees. The scope and frequency of the programs already in place is noteworthy and gratifying. Hopefully, this inventory and description of current practice will be helpful and encouraging to other organizations considering such programs for the future.

As smaller firms grow and find it more difficult to maintain satisfactory levels of upward communication, and as firms of all sizes deal with changing environmental conditions that put a premium on a better flow of information within their organizations, the use of such upward-communication programs may provide a competitive advantage as well as a more satisfying workplace.

NOTE

[1]A method for evaluating managerial feedback instruments and a review and comparison of sixteen widely used instruments can be found in *Feedback to Managers, Volume I: A Guide to Evaluating Multi-rater Feedback Instruments* and *Volume II: A Review and Comparison of Sixteen Multi-rater Feedback Instruments* (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1991).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
List of Participating Companies

3M Company
Albertson's, Inc.
American Home Products Corp.
American Red Cross
Anheuser-Busch Companies, Inc.
Ashland Oil, Inc.
AT&T
Atlantic Richfield Co.
Bank of America, NT & SA
Bell Atlantic Corp.
Borden
Burlington Northern Inc.
Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce
Chase Manhattan Bank, N.A.
Citibank
Citicorp
Control Data Corp.
Detroit Edison Co.
Dofasco Inc.
Dow Chemical Co.
E. I. duPont de Nemours & Co.
Eastman Kodak Co.
Eaton Corp.
Eli Lilly and Company
Equitable Life Assurance
Exxon Company, U.S.A.
Federal Express Corp.
Federated Department Stores, Inc.
First National Bank of Ohio
Ford Motor Company
Frito-Lay, Pepsicola Division
General Dynamics Corp.
General Electric Co.
General Mills, Inc.
General Motors Corp.
GTE Corp.
Hewlett-Packard Co.
Honeywell, Inc.
IDS Financial Services Inc.
Inland Steel Co.
Johnson & Johnson
The Kroger Co.
Manufacturers Hanover Trust Co.
McDonald's Corporation
MCI Communications Corp.
McKesson Corporation
Merck & Co., Inc.
Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.
Motorola, Inc.
Nationwide Insurance
New York Daily News
Northrop Corp.
Nynex Corp.
Olin Corporation
Pacific Telesis Group
Pepsico
Procter & Gamble Co.
Prudential Insurance Co.
R. R. Donnelley & Sons
RJR Nabisco, Inc.
Sears, Roebuck and Company
Shell Oil Company
Southland Corp.
Southwestern Bell Corp.
State Farm Insurance Co.
Texas Instruments, Inc.
Travelers Insurance Co.
United Technologies Corp.
Walgreen Co.
The Walt Disney Company
Warner-Lambert Company
Wells Fargo & Company
Westinghouse Electric Corp.
Wickes Companies, Inc.
Xerox Corp.

APPENDIX B
Survey Cover Letter

Vice President, Human Resources
XYZ Company
Central Park, IL 61234

Dear Vice President:

We're writing for your help in a review of "Upward Communications" programs among leading firms. Your organization, mentioned by Dun's Business Month as being among the "best managed," likely has some progressive and innovative employee communications practices which we hope you can share with us. Our review will be made available to the public and can aid many firms to be more effective through better upward communications.

The Center for Creative Leadership is a nonprofit educational institution, dedicated to research and education on creative leadership and effective management (a brief description is enclosed).

Could you, or an appropriate member of your staff, kindly take a few minutes to:

(1) fill out the one-page questionnaire enclosed;

(2) return it to us along with written materials describing those programs you use (as mentioned in the questionnaire). Please send us any sample forms and internal publications about these programs;

(3) also send any statement of your organization's philosophy about upward communication, if this is available.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation. In return, we will be pleased to send you a copy of the final report. Also, if you like, we will be glad to put you on CCL's mailing list for our quarterly newsletter, "Issues & Observations" (copy enclosed). Your help is sincerely appreciated.

Sincerely,

Frank H. Freeman
Librarian

Completed Survey Form

REVIEW OF UPWARDS COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM

Does your organization have (or use) any of the following programs?
(Circle one answer for each program - Y = yes, N = No)

Program	Use Programs?		Materials Available?	
1. OPEN DOOR (opportunity to appeal or speak to higher levels of management) — Let's Talk	Y	N	Y	N
2. OPINION SURVEYS (regular polls of employee attitudes	Y	N	Y	N
3. SUGGESTION PROGRAMS (where ideas are submitted to make improvements) — Ideas in Action	Y	N	Y	N
4. OMBUDSMAN (a mediator or representative to help resolve conflicts and disagreements) — Human Resources Representative	Y	N	Y	N
5. SKIP-LEVEL INTERVIEWS (where executives meet with employees several levels below them) — Let's Talk	Y	N	Y	N
6. SPEAK OUT (a confidential program to say "What's on your Mind" and get a direct reply) — Open Line	Y	N	Y	N
7. HOT-LINES (a confidential program using telephones to respond to employee concerns)	*Y	N	Y	N
8. ADVISORY BOARDS (Employees, elected or appointed to a committee to give feedback and advice to top management)	Y	N	Y	N
9. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS (periodic meetings where employees can submit questions for discussion and reply)	Y	N	Y	N
10. REGULAR/MONTHLY MEETINGS (scheduled meetings to provide information and answer questions)	Y	N	Y	N
11. DEPARTMENT MEETINGS (if different than above)	Y	N	Y	N
12. OTHER (please describe) ______________	Y	N	Y	N

Now, please indicate for each program if descriptive materials are available (Y) or not (N).

Completed by: Dr. Nancy Rotchford

Title: V.P., Personnel Research

Organization: Bank of America

Telephone #: ______________

> Please return this form and descriptive materials to:
> Mr. Francis H. Freeman
> Center for Creative Leadership
> P. O. Box P-1
> Greensboro, NC 27402

* Senior managers use hotlines for communication of ways to increase productivity, reduce costs, etc. The senior manager establishes a hotline and encourages employees to call the senior manager directly with their ideas.

APPENDIX C

RULES OF THE KODAK SUGGESTION PLAN

A suggestion is your idea to improve something.

Submitting Suggestions—Suggestions must be submitted on an Employee Suggestion Form. A separate form is to be used for each idea. Please sign you name, detach, and keep the Suggester's copy for your records. Your completed Suggestion Form, with any additional information, can be submitted in the suggestion boxes or by sending it to the Suggestion Office.

Employee Participation—Only active employees, retirees, persons on leave of absence, and persons receiving benefits under the Kodak Long Term Disability Plan may participate in the Suggestion Plan.

Subject Matter—Ideas which pertain to increasing quality, improving productivity, reducing costs and enhancing safety will be eligible for consideration for an award.

Eligibility—Eligibility to receive awards is determined by the employee's supervision examining the relationship between the subject matter the employee's job responsibilities at the time the suggestion is submitted.

Evaluating Suggestions—Suggestions are systematically investigated for merit so that a decision can be made as to whether they should be adopted. if a suggestion is not adopted, the suggester is notified with a written explanation.

Awards—Where a suggestion of an eligible employee results in benefits that are measurable or can be estimated, the maximum award paid is in an amount equal to 15 percent of the total net savings during the two-year period following implementation of the suggestion. Net savings are the gross savings minus the cost to implement the suggestion. Where there are no measurable or estimated savings, the award amount is determined by the merit and value of the suggestion to the company. Awards for adopted suggestions range from a minimum of $15 to a maximum of $50,0000. All cash awards are subject to federal. state. and local income taxes, as well as Social Security taxes.

Duplicate Suggestions—In the case of duplicate suggestions, the suggestion with the earlier date stamped by the Suggestion Office will be eligible for an award. If two or more duplicate suggestions are stamped with the same date, the award for an adopted idea will be shared equally.

Multiple Suggesters—If more than one suggester signs a suggestion which is adopted. any award is shared equally.

Anonymous Suggesters—For unsigned suggestions, the number appearing on the Suggester's Copy retained by you may be used to inquire on the status of the suggestion.

Reevaluation of Suggestions—If a suggestion is not adopted, the employee can reopen the suggestion if there is additional information the employee wishes to provide. This request for reevaluation can be anytime during the equity period of a suggestion.

Equity—The equity period for suggestions is four years from the date stamped on the Employee Suggestion Form by the Suggestion Office. No award will be made for a suggestion used by the company more than four years after it was first submitted. An extension to the equity period may be granted for meritorious reasons upon request of the suggestor and approval by the Suggestion Office.

Suggestions become the property of the Eastman Kodak Company upon receipt in the Suggestion Office.

Whether a suggestion should be adopted and the amount of the award are matters of judgment. it is the policy of the company to strive to make these judgments fairly. The decision of the Suggestion Committee on all matters pertaining to this suggestion, eligibility for an award, and the amount of the award if any, will be final, binding and conclusive. These rules are a summary of the Suggestion Plan. The Suggestion Plan serves as final authority in all matters relating to plan interpretation. A copy of this plan may be obtained by contacting your suggestion analyst or the Corporate Suggestion Office.

The company reserves the right to modify the rules of the Suggestion Plan at any time.

PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- all employees and pensioners of the bank worldwide
- officers at the level of vice president and above, and employees of the suggestion program department, although eligible to participate, cannot receive awards

WHAT QUALIFIES AS A SUGGESTION?

The bank is interested in your suggestion on practically any topic, provided it is outside the normal scope of your job. To explain - if you offer a suggestion regarding something that affects the work you do, this would generally be an eligible idea. In cases where your job duties specifically require you to investigate, develop or implement ideas on a given subject, suggestions relating to that topic would be ineligible for award purposes.

THERE ARE THREE BASIC GUIDELINES THAT MUST BE MET.

The suggestion must:

- be submitted in writing on an IDEA$ submission form
- identify a specific problem or opportunity and
- offer a workable solution

Some suggestion topics are ineligible for award purposes. They include those which:

- have been previously submitted, or are already under active consideration
- concern policy decisions periodically reviewed by management (for example, compensation plans, benefit programs, adjustments in interest rates, pricing for services)
- concern collective agreements
- relate to minor errors in forms or other published materials or
- concern basic maintenance and housekeeping

HOW TO SUBMIT A SUGGESTION?

Once you decide to submit a suggestion, either on your own or jointly, complete a suggestion submission form. These forms are available in the IDEA$ display unit situated in your branch or office and step by step preparation instructions are included. You may correspond in English or French.

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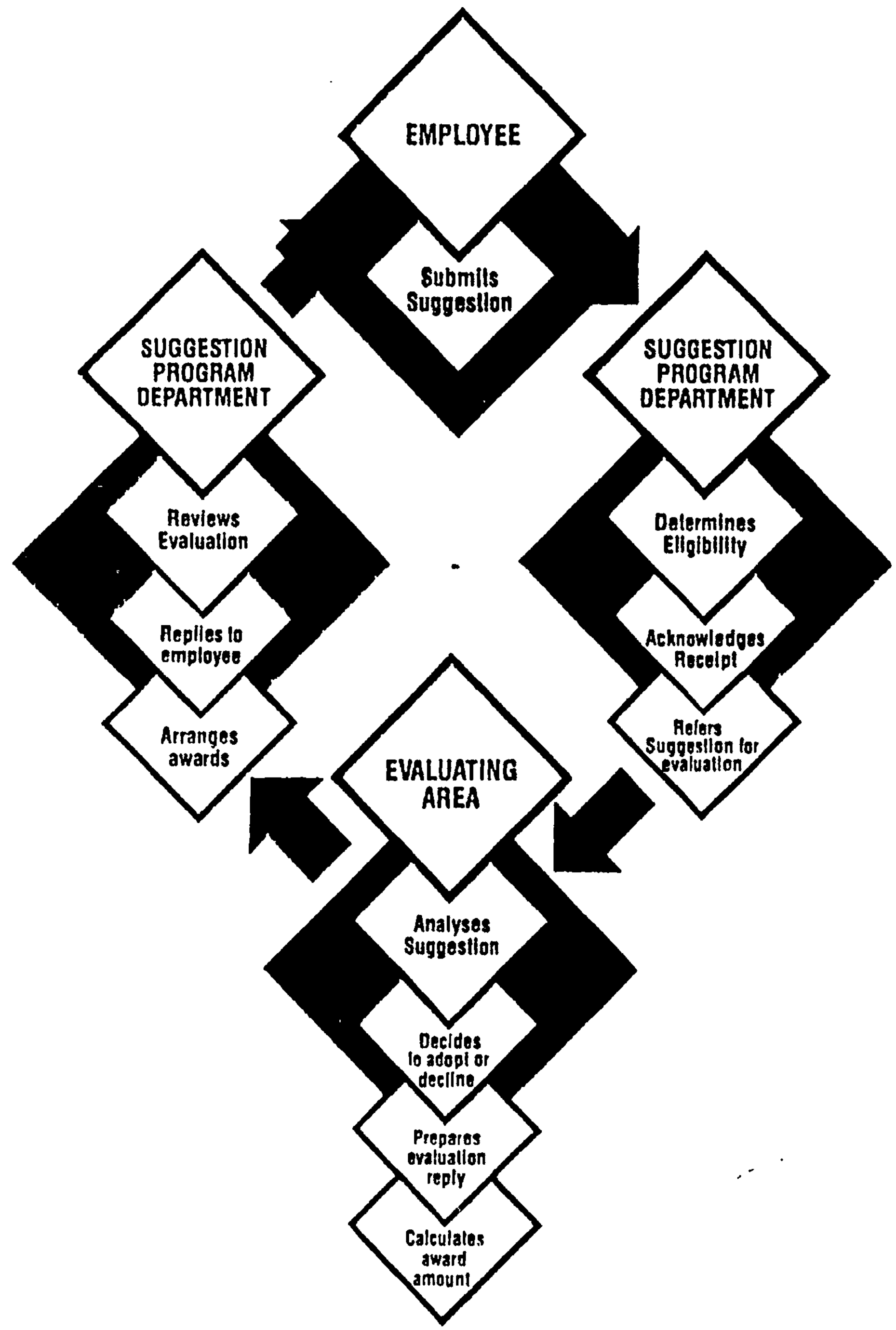
WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOUR SUGGESTION IS SUBMITTED?

HERE ARE THE STEPS INVOLVED



APPENDIX D
Bank Suggestion Program Brochure

PERSONNEL POLICY & PROCEDURES

TITLE	POLICY NO.	
PROBLEM RESOLUTION	M9	
	EFFECTIVE DATE	PAGE
	9/1/86	1 of 1

SCOPE

All employees not covered by a collective bargaining agreement.

PHILOSOPHY

It is the desire of the Company to maintain relations with employees on a plane that recognizes the dignity of the individual and constantly seeks to provide better mutual understanding and relationships through fair and considerate dealings with all employees.

POLICY

Despite the efforts of all concerned, it is recognized that problems will arise from time to time. These may involve personal differences, disagreements or interpretations of policy. Accordingly, the Company shall maintain a Problem Resolution procedure at all locations whereby employees will have assurance that such problems will be addressed. All matters properly brought to the attention of the Company representative will be given prompt and equitable consideration. In accordance with this policy, an employee's position should not be jeopardized for attempting to resolve a problem through this procedure.

PROCEDURES

1. In cases where problems arise employees and supervisors should make every effort to informally resolve the problem. Each supervisor is expected to listen to and carefully consider the complaints of employees.

2. If an employee cannot resolve a problem with his/her immediate supervisor through an informal approach, the employee is encouraged to bring it to each successively higher level of supervision, up to and including the President of the Company. Requests for resolution of the problem more than two levels above the employee must be made in writing with copies to the employee's supervisor and appropriate personnel representative. All such requests shall be responded to in writing within a reasonable time, normally within ten working days.

3. Employees or supervisors may, at any time, informally discuss a problem with the Personnel Department. (Personnel will designate a representative for each area who will be responsible for reviewing and seeking resolution to problems and for counseling employees and supervisors.) Through confidential discussions, the Personnel representative can explore ways to solve the problem — clarifications of policy, counseling, informal discussions with the parties concerned, etc. Those contacting Personnel for informal assistance in problem resolution, or for any other counseling or advice, can be assured that conversations will be kept confidential — no notation will be made in their Personnel folders and their supervisors will not be contacted without their permission.

MERCK & CO., INC.

APPENDIX F
IBM Open-door Policy

Open Door

Another basic IBM communications channel is the Open Door.

The Open Door Policy, a reflection of IBM's belief in respect for the individual, is deeply ingrained in IBM's history. It is based on the conviction that every employee has a right to appeal the actions of those who are immediately over him or her in authority.

Should you have a problem which you believe the company can help solve, discuss it with your immediate manager, your manager's manager, your personnel manager, or your branch or site manager. You will find that a frank talk with your manager is usually the easiest way to deal with the problem.

If the matter was not resolved or is of such nature that you prefer not to discuss it with your location management, you should go to your regional manager or president or general manager of your division or subsidiary.

Finally, if you feel that you still have not received a satisfactory answer, you may cover the matter with the chief executive officer by mail, or personally if the chief executive officer finds it appropriate to the resolution.

(excerpted from IBM's employee handbook, About Your Company.)

APPENDIX G

DOCUMENTING THE EMPLOYEE COMPLAINT PROCESS

Documentation

Once an employee originates a complaint, the case should be appropriately documented. To ensure confidentiality, the Human Resources Officer should maintain the record. Documentation should include:

- a profile of the individual -- job title, salary level, performance evaluation, and other relevant facts.
- a description of the individual's complaint or perceptions.
- documentation of the findings, normally organized in chronological sequence along with the source of the facts.
- an analysis of the facts with conclusions including a list of actions to be taken and by whom.

For complaints that are routed to the CEO, a copy of the documentation should be shared with the Senior Vice President, Corporate Human Resources.

Recordkeeping

The Human Resources office retains the documentation and associated materials for six years after the case is closed. Open door material should never be filed in an employee's personnel folder.

Confidentiality

Managers and others involved in a complaint review are charged with maintaining confidentiality and sharing information only on a "need-to-know" basis.

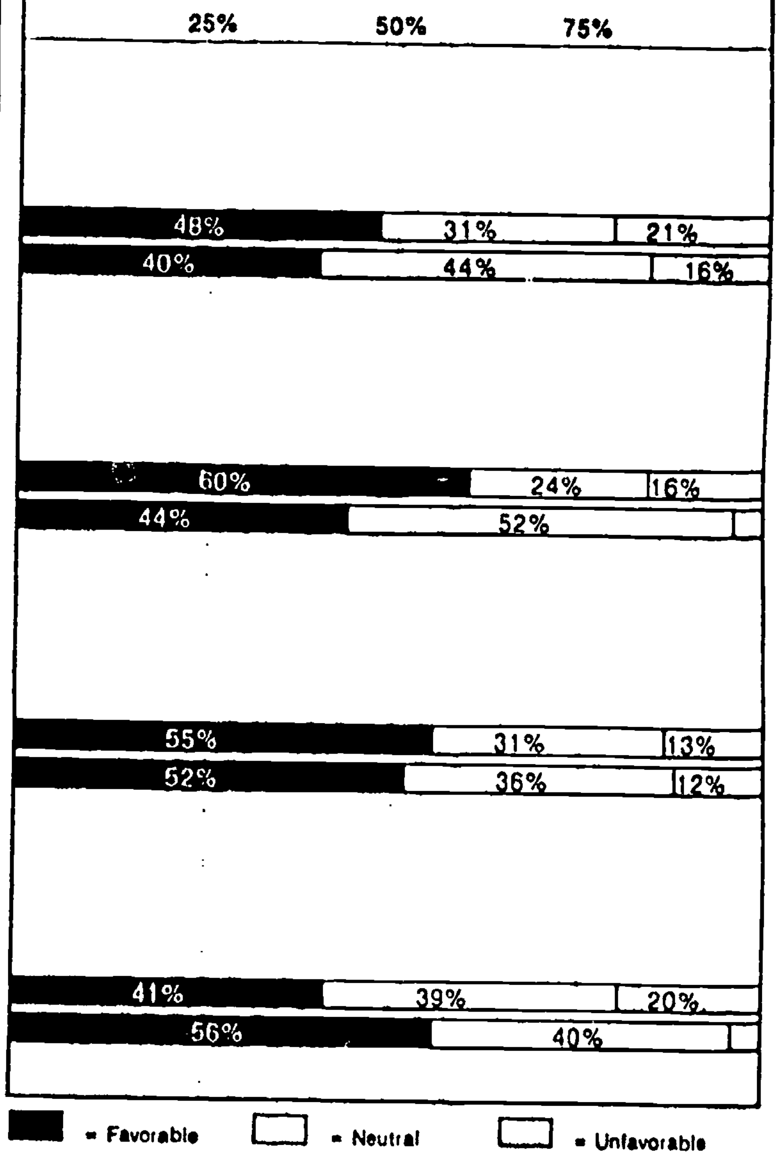
(Excerpted from the open door policy statement of a major insurance company)

Consolidated Sample Corporation

Employee Opinion Survey

Customer Service/Quality	All or Most	Many	About Half	A Few	None of Them	Number of Respondents
16 In your experience, how many people in this organization are really committed to producing high quality work?						
Organization Total	5%	42%	31%	17%	4%	994
Work Group	4%	36%	44%	16%	0%	25
17 In your experience, how many people in this organization take pride in doing a good job?						
Organization Total	9%	52%	24%	13%	3%	997
Work Group	8%	36%	52%	4%	0%	25
19 In your experience, how many people in this organization are willing to put in as much effort as is necessary to get the job done on schedule?						
Organization Total	12%	43%	31%	9%	5%	993
Work Group	8%	44%	36%	12%	0%	25
20. In your experience, how many people in this organization participate willingly in efforts to improve performance in the department?						
Organization Total	3%	39%	39%	8%	11%	1000
Work Group	0%	56%	40%	0%	4%	25

Percent Responding



APPENDIX H

PURPOSE

To provide a forum for groups of employees to meet with management at the Region, Branch, CRC, RDC, or Headquarters level on topics of mutual interest.

WHEN

Meetings are conducted informally in a variety of ways and involve various levels of management. Regional functional managers (such as Technical Service managers) attempt to hold at least one such meeting in every Branch at least once a year. In the Regions, the Region Vice President and General Manager or one of his staff holds such meetings at the Region Office or in the Branch, RDC, or CRC with randomly selected employees from throughout the Region. In order to allow broader participation, the Region may institute such meetings annually at all locations, with the meeting being chaired by the respective Branch Operations Manager, or Region Functional Manager in the case of the Regional Distribution and Refurbishing Centers.

Communication meetings are scheduled at ISG Headquarters within functional areas.

HOW

By the employees, as an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the issues facing the business. By the managers involved, to gain a better understanding of the day-to-day field operations and, most importantly, as an information-gathering source to assist in future decisions. These sessions are initiated by management.

SUMMARY

Such meetings provide a unique opportunity not only to meet Region or Headquarters management, but also gain the benefit of management's knowledge and perspective of the total business picture. In addition, the input provided by the participants at such meetings is an invaluable resource of ideas and problem identification and resolution.

Does everything get resolved at such meetings? No, but employees normally come away with information which provides a better understanding of what can or cannot be done, and, more importantly, *why*.

In some organizations EMPLOYEE RELATIONS REVIEWS have been substituted for the EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION MEETINGS. The purpose remains the same but employee meetings are conducted by Region management in the Branches.

Management also gains from these meetings, and the information gleaned from them will be used as a basis of future decisions.

A .?ENDIX J
Merck & Co., Inc.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Communication Guidebook

APPENDIX K
GTE

PERSONNEL PRACTICES

Personnel Policy
Guidelines

Practice PE-55
Issue 1, April 1983

SKIP LEVEL INTERVIEW

1. GENERAL
This practice is new. It describes the skip level interview and the procedures involved. Please file in numerical sequence.

2. DEFINITION
The skip level interview offers each employee the opportunity to meet with the member of management to whom the employee's immediate supervisor reports.

3. PURPOSE
The skip level interview is a method of helping to maintain good communications between employ.es and management. It is not intended to interfere with established reporting relationships. Nor is it a method of evaluating performance. Its primary objectives are to:

   a. Encourage and facilitate discussion on the employee's career goals and how they relate to the company's future direction.

   b. Give employees an opportunity to discuss with management job-related topics of mutual concern.

   c. Provide employees an opportunity to talk with higher levels of management in an informal environment.

   d. Increase management awareness of conditions that affect employee morale, motivation and the overall quality of the company's products and services.

   e. Provide management an opportunity to listen to and better understand employee concerns and suggestions, as well as to take appropriate actions.

4. ELIGIBILITY

   a. All GTEDS' employees are eligible. Each should be invited to participate in an interview at least once yearly.

   b. Employees should be encouraged to participate in skip level interview., but their involvement is fully voluntary. They may request an interview, or decline one.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES
The manager or supervisor should follow the guidelines below when preparing for, conducting and following-up on skip level interviews.

Initiate the interview
The manager or supervisor should invite all potential interviewees to participate in the skip level interview by explaining the purpose of the program to them.

Schedule the interview

a. The scheduling procedure is the responsibility of the manager or supervisor, but may also be initiated by an employee request.

b. The meeting should be scheduled at least one week in advance to permit adequate preparation time.

c. Appointments should be scheduled to allow sufficient time for a thorough discussion of all issues (30 minutes to 1 1/2 hours).

d. If at all possible, the interview should be held in a conference room or another location away from the work area.

Structure the interview

a. Although the interview will focus on issues of interest to the employee, some preparation is essential in order to assure a successful exchange of ideas takes place. Attachment 1 is an Employee Data Checklist. The manager or supervisor should review this list prior to the interview.

b. Suggested topics for discussion during skip level interviews include:
   - Employee's career goals and how they relate to the company's future direction
   - Job assignments
   - Work environment
   - Organizational/departmental practices
   - Suggestions for improvement in both GTEDS' products and services
   - Areas of satisfaction or dissatisfaction
   - Additional areas of interest

   (For suggestions on how to begin discussion of these issues, see Attachment 2.)

c. At the start of the interview, the manager or supervisor should review its purpose and agenda with the employee.

d. The manager or supervisor should begin the interview with general questions on low risk issues.

e. At an appropriate time during the interview, the manager or supervisor should develop a.l action plan to address the employee's concerns and establish a follow-up date with him or her, it appropriate.

f. The manager or supervisor should follow each interview with a period of self evaluation to determine the manager or supervisor's effectiveness in conducting the interview. (For suggested areas of self analysis, see Attachment 3).

Establish a climate conducive to two-way communications

The manager or supervisor should:

a. Greet the employee in a friendly manner.

b. Encourage the employee to talk.

c. Ask the employee if it is okay for you to occasionally take notes to capture the employee's concerns. Note taking should be done discreetly and should not disrupt communications.

d. Concentrate on listening to the employee.

e. Ask open-ended questions. (See Attachment 2)

f. Interact in a candid and open manner.

g. Thank the employee.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Employees must be assured complete confidentiality of the subjects discussed. If further actions are required on issues that arise from skip level interviews, the employee's permission must be obtained to mention his/her name on any subjects discussed.

ATTACHMENT 1

EMPLOYEE DATA CHECKLIST

_____ Employee name/nickname

_____ Key concerns; concerns likely to recur

_____ Current level; how long in level

_____ Current salary

_____ Date and amount of last increase

_____ Current performance rating

_____ Date of last evaluation

_____ Any rewards or special recognition

_____ Job title

_____ Manager's name

_____ Number of employees in department

_____ How long in my organization

_____ How long in current assignment

_____ Career objectives

_____ Have I reviewed all pertinent data (development plan, personnel jacket)

_____ Anything else?

ATTACHMENT 2

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION OPENING QUESTIONS

_____ How do you feel about career opportunities at GTEDS?

_____ How do you feel about the way GTEDS handles transfers/promotions?

_____ How do you feel about the way you have advanced since starting to work for GTEDS?

_____ How do you feel about your present and future promotional opportunities?

_____ Let's suppose I gave you unlimited resources and asked you to correct our biggest problem at this location/division/company. What would you tackle and why?

_____ What changes, if any, would you make to improve the organization's effectiveness?

_____ Do you feel your job skills are utilized adequately? What changes, if any, would you suggest?

_____ How do you feel about job training you have received?

_____ What kind of training, if any, would you like to receive?

ATTACHMENT 3

INTERVIEW EVALUATION

Self-Analysis

Did the interview go as I anticipated?:

Was it a two-way exchange?:

Who did the most talking?:

Were objectives stated clearly?:

Was I open and honest in my replies?:

Did the employee understand why I took notes and were the points noted reviewed at the end of the interview?:

How did the employee feel at the conclusion of the interview?:

How did I learn about myself from the interview?:

If I could do it over again, what would I do differently?:

What did I learn about myself from the interview?:

Commitments

Did I understand the employee's concerns?:

Which concerns require review with other management?:

What commitments did I make to the employee?:

When did I promise to reply to commitments?:

How quickly can I respond?:

Is an interim response required?:

Have I informed the employee personally of action resulting from the discussion?:

Documentation

Have I documented the essential parts of the interview?:

What was my general evaluation of the employee's satisfaction with GTEDS?:

Would it be useful for the employee to talk to someone else?:

When should I plan another interview for this person?:

Anything else?:

APPENDIX L
Eastman Kodak Company
Speak-out Program

DIALOG

Express yourself...confidentially.

What is DIALOG?

DIALOG is a confidential two-way communication. It sends your question, comment, or opinion directly to a member of Kodak management. Inquiries on any aspect of the company's operations are welcome, except those dealing with confidential matters or personalities.

To get information about DIALOG, please call your site contact or the Administrator of the DIALOG program who is located in Rochester (ext. 44137).

Your name will not be revealed to anyone without your permission.

Kodak

Date ______________________

DIALOG

Express yourself...confidentially.

For Kodak employees only

Ideas or suggestions for improved processes or procedures, which are intended for financial award consideration, must be submitted to the Kodak Suggestion System.

No.

No.

Complete Confidentiality:

This section will be removed by the DIALOG Administrator, who will be the only person to see it.

Check here ☐ If you do not wish to have your letter published in your company newspaper. (Your name will NOT be used.)

Check here ☐ If, instead of a mailed reply, you prefer to have the DIALOG Administrator set up a discussion with a qualified person.

Name (Please print)

Home or Business Address

City State Zip Code

Department Division

Identify home or work location telephone. Indicate area code

Remember, if you don't include your name, you cannot receive an answer unless it is chosen for publication.

What happens when the Administrator receives my DIALOG?

Your name is assigned a code number and placed in a locked box. DIALOG retypes your letter with the same identifying number and forwards it to the appropriate member of Kodak management for reply. The answer to your question is mailed by the Administrator to your home, unless you specify otherwise.

What if I don't sign my DIALOG?

You may submit an unsigned DIALOG, which will be sent to the appropriate manager for review. However, without your name and address, a direct reply is not possible.

Will DIALOG questions and answers be published?

The company newspaper will publish DIALOG questions and answers that are of general interest to employees. In no case will the company paper have the name of the employee submitting the question or comment

How is an interview arranged?

If you checked the box requesting an interview, the Administrator will call to obtain your approval for a telephone discussion or a personal meeting with the appropriate person. Only if you agree will the interviewer be given your name.

FOLD HERE

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED IN THE
UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO. 131 ROCHESTER, N.Y.

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY:

Eastman Kodak Company
DIALOG Administrator
P.O. Box 92894
Rochester, New York 14692-9939

To Be Opened By The DIALOG Administrator Only

846 1007-730 (11 86)

When should I write to DIALOG?

Anytime . . . but it is always a good idea first to consider doing one of the following:

- *Talking to your supervisor.* In most cases, answers to questions and solutions to problems can be handled readily in this manner. However, if you feel that DIALOG is a more suitable way to communicate, please feel free to use it.
- *Checking the "You and Kodak" book.* It contains many details on Kodak's benefit plans.
- *Calling the department involved.* You may find a quick and direct answer to your question.
- *Using the Suggestion Program.* DIALOG only provides answers—not Suggestion Awards. Please contact your Suggestion Office to follow up on suggestions which have been submitted.

How do I use the program?

Write your comment or question on the inside of this postage-paid DIALOG form. Use a new form for each subject. Complete the lower section, fold on the dotted lines, and seal the form securely. Send it to your DIALOG Administrator via either company or U.S. mail.

Eastman Kodak Company
Speak-out Program

APPENDIX M
Pacific Bell
Feeaback Reply Postcard

This is the answer FEEDBACK has obtained for your question (No.________). Your opinion of this response will help us as we administer the program. We will also send it on to the person who wrote your answer. Please check the appropriate boxes and drop this card in the U.S. Mail.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Do you feel your question has been:			
Clearly answered?	☐	☐	☐
Promptly handled?	☐	☐	☐
Whether you agree or disagree with the answer you received, do you feel your questi[illegible] given thorough attention?	☐	☐	☐
Do you feel the FEEDBACK program is helpful to employees?	☐	☐	☐

Comments:____

____

FIRST CLASS
Permit No. 1654
San Francisco, CA

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
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POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY–

Feedback

PACIFIC BELL
140 NEW MONTGOMERY ST
ROOM 628
SAN FRANCISCO, CA. 94105

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APPENDIX N
Walt Disney Advisory Board
Program Description

THE ADVISORY BOARD NEEDS YOU!

You can make a difference!

Have you ever wanted to help plan employee events, contribute to the <u>Newsreel</u>, give input on training programs and discuss employee ideas and concerns? The Disney University Advisory Board is the place for you!

What is the Advisory Board?

The Advisory Board is a group of employees representing many areas of the Company. Board members meet with Disney University staff to discuss issues pertinent to employees and to plan and implement events for employees. The Board acts not only as a liaison between employees, the University and upper management, but also as a resource to employees with needed information, services, and Company news.

What Do Board Members Do?

The Advisory Board meets for approximately one hour every other Wednesday morning. This time commitment is crucial to the Board's success; it allows each member to contribute on a regular basis while providing a forum not only to discuss employee concerns and plan events, but also to keep members aware of upcoming activities and issues.

Board members also volunteer time to assist the University staff in implementing events they help plan, such as the Academy Awards Party, Family Picnic, Fitness Fair, Forum, Halloween Happenings and One Magic Christmas Faire.

Lastly, Board members exchange issues, ideas and plans between their co-workers and fellow board members. They also provide updates on their accomplishments and answer questions each month in the <u>Newsreel</u>.

How Can I Apply?

Representatives from all areas of the Company are needed for the Advisory Board. If you are interested in joining, please pick up an application in the Employee Center or WDI Activity Center.

If you are an off-site employee, you are needed too! You may call the Center and request an application be mailed to you. If you are currently on the Board, you may reapply for another term--just fill out the application.

With your help, the Disney University Advisory Board will be the most exciting and productive yet. Pick up your application today!

Ombudsman's job is to represent readers within The News

Ann Arbor doesn't follow the calendar used by the rest of the world. Our new year doesn't start in January, it begins in September when classes resume at the University of Michigan. And the new year means new readers for The Ann Arbor News. Today's column was originally published several months ago. It is repeated today, revised and updated, to introduce the ombudsman.

DAVID BISHOP
OMBUDSMAN

When the publisher of The Ann Arbor News created the position of ombudsman in 1986, the person he appointed to the job had only a vague understanding of what he was being asked to do.

He wasn't even sure how to spell or pronounce his new job title, and some of the readers were confused too. One of the first letters to arrive on the ombudsman's desk was addressed to the Ann Arbor News Omnibussman.

Eighteen months and an estimated 2,400 complaints later, the ombudsman and the readers are getting more comfortable with this strange and unusual subcraft of journalism. We've even learned how to spell and pronounce OM-buds-man.

Defining ombudsman

Ombudsman is a Swedish word for intermediary. In Sweden, ombudsmen originally were government officials appointed to receive and investigate complaints made by individuals against public officials. Because it's an unusual word, some newspapers call their ombudsmen "reader representative" or "reader advocate."

There are now about 40 ombudsmen at newspapers in the U.S. and Canada. I was the first of three appointed in Michigan last year. The Detroit News and The Detroit Free Press have ombudsmen, but most of their work is done internally and they do not write columns.

The first news ombudsman was appointed at the Louisville (Ky.) Courier-Journal in 1967 at a time when there was growing concern across the country about the credibility of newspapers. The idea has grown in the 20 years since, and so has the concern about the public's declining regard for journalism and journalists.

Some of the largest, most highly regarded newspapers in the country have ombudsmen, including The Washington Post, The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, The Milwaukee Journal, The Minneapolis Star and Tribune, The Boston Globe and the Philadelphia Inquirer.

The Ann Arbor News is the smallest newspaper with a full-time ombudsman.

Objectives of the job

The objectives of The Ann Arbor News ombudsman are challenging, but simple and straightforward. They were adapted from the Guidelines for Ombudsmen adopted by the Organization of News Ombudsmen in 1982. They are:

- To improve the fairness, accuracy and accountability of the newspaper.
- To improve its service to readers, customers and advertisers.
- To enhance its credibility.
- To interpret the newspaper for its readers.
- To strive to improve its quality.
- To make the newspaper aware of the concerns of, and the issues in, the communities it serves.

How the process works

Readers call or write the ombudsman to make a comment, ask a question or lodge a complaint. I attempt to answer the questions, I pass the comments along to the appropriate editors or department managers and I investigate the complaints.

Most complaints raise questions about the fairness or accuracy of news stories. When I receive a complaint, I go to the reporters or editors who were involved in the story and ask them to respond to the complaint. I often do some independent fact-finding and frequently I make a judgment about the validity of the complaint.

When the same complaint comes from a number of readers, or when it raises a significant or interesting issue, I write about it in this column. I also write a periodic internal log for consumption by all News employees, and memos on specific issues to the publisher or editor.

I audit the accuracy of news coverage through a program started several months ago. On a random basis, I select a number of stories each month and send clippings and a questionnaire to the sources. I ask them to evaluate the fairness, balance and accuracy of the story.

The ombudsman does not have the authority to discipline an employee or take corrective action. He does make recommendations.

The principle of independence

The little note at the bottom of this column says the ombudsman's opinions and conclusions are his own. Indeed, they are. My opinions do not represent the views of management, and they do not represent the official policy of the newspaper. I attempt to influence policies, but I do not enunciate them.

That organization separation and independence has another dimension. I am not a part of the news department. No one at The News reviews my column for substance or content. I am free to write what I choose.

I report directly to the publisher. During the past 18 months he has been a strong supporter of ombudsmanship and he has never attempted to interfere with my independence. If there are any limitations on the ombudsman, they are self-imposed.

Reactions to ombudsman varied

Internally and externally, the reactions to ombudsmanship have been interesting.

Readers like the idea that someone at The News cares about their concerns and interests, and it isn't unusual for them to conclude letters or phone calls with "thanks for listening" or "keep up the good work." They want to talk back to the newspaper, and the ombudsman gives them that opportunity.

It's a little more difficult to gauge the internal reaction. I think most reporters and editors support ombudsmanship in the abstract, but when they are personally confronted with the process, some have wondered whether ombudsmanship helps or hurts The News.

When I'm asked to describe my personal reaction to the past 18 months, I usually quote a former Washington Post ombudsman. When Sam Zagoria completed his term at the Post, someone asked him to summarize his experience. Zagoria responded:

"When the Red Cross calls and asks me to donate blood, I can say with integrity that I gave at the office."

The ombudsman represents the readers. His opinions and conclusions are his own. If you have a complaint, question or comment write the Ombudsman, The Ann Arbor News, P.O. Box 1147, Ann Arbor, 48106, or call him at 994-6878.

OMBUDSMAN

HOW TO BE YOUR OWN OMBUDSMAN

1. Take all employee issues brought to you seriously.
2. Be open-minded and objective.
3. Get all the facts - (see other side).
4. Analyze and Compare all sides of the issue(s).
5. Draw conclusions from the facts and your analysis of the facts only.
6. Tell employee(s)
   - What you've learned
   - What you've concluded
   - What you've decided

GATHERING THE FACTS

1. Get a complete account from the employee; and, talk to all others involved.
2. Take complete notes - don't rely on memory.
3. Ask every question that comes to [illegible]what-why-who-where-when-h[illegible]
4. Re[illegible]t questions if you don't understand the answer. Accuracy and understanding are essential.
5. Listen! Listen! Listen! Clarify! Clarify! Clarify! Discount assumptions, innuendos, and opinion unsupported by facts.
6. Gather relevant records to confirm or extend understanding of the issue(s).

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APPENDIX Q
General Dynamics

Ethics Hotline Phone Network Is Expanded To Accommodate Personnel-Related Concerns

New Personnel Hotlines will join the existing Ethics Hotlines at all company locations as part of the expanding program of confidential employee communications, according to Arch H. Rambeau, Vice President-Human Resources.

The Personnel Hotlines will be dedicated to dealing with employee relations. As part of the same program, a Personnel Ombudsman will be provided to answer the new hotline and to hear employees' concerns at each location, Rambeau said. Employees at all locations will also be able to call a Corporate Personnel Ombudsman in St. Louis at a toll-free "800" number, just as they can call the Corporate Ethics Director at (800) 433-8442.

"The new hotlines are a result of the large volume and variety of calls that Ethics Program Directors at all locations have been receiving since the Ethics Hotlines began operation last year, as well as a response to some of the concerns expressed in the recent Employee Survey," Rambeau said.

More than 25 percent of the calls received on the Ethics Hotlines last year were about employee or personnel non-ethics related concerns.

"These Personnel Hotlines are dedicated specifically to calls concerning our commitment, as employees, to treat one another fairly and with dignity and respect," Rambeau said. "The hotlines open another avenue to hear and respond to employee relations matters. Of course, the Ethics Hotline will continue to be available to any employee wanting to use it, regardless of the specific matter involved."

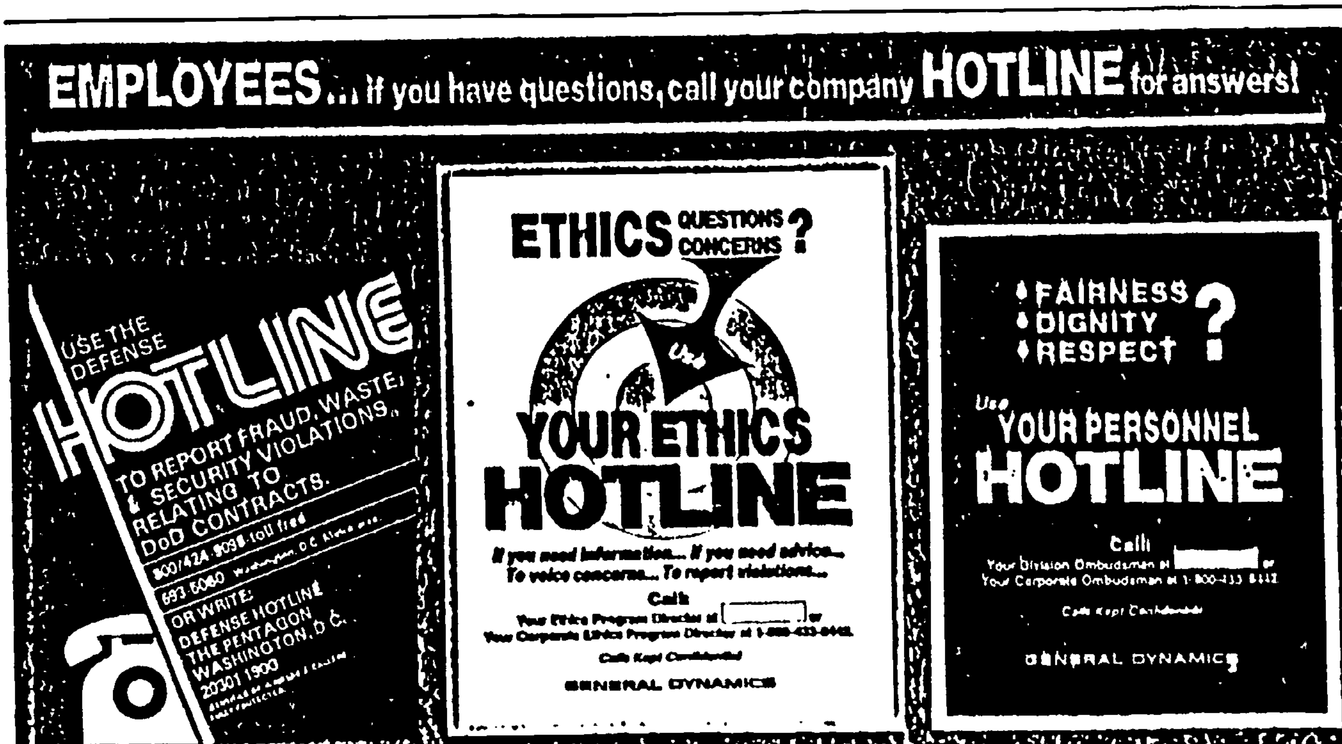
Rambeau stressed that employees can use either the Personnel Hotline or the Ethics Hotline without fear of reprisal. "Taking or threatening reprisal against anyone for using either of the hotlines or for otherwise communicating with the Ethics Program Directors or the Personnel Ombudsmen will not be tolerated," he said.

Phone numbers for company hotlines and for a Department of Defense Hotline to report known or suspected instances of fraud, waste or security irregularities will be publicized on large display panels at all company locations. These displays will begin appearing in the workplaces in the near future.

(See Sample Poster on Page 2)

"Employees are free to use either the DoD Hotline or the General Dynamics Ethics Hotlines, but I hope they will use ours so the company can solve its problems itself," Rambeau said. "Our company commitment is that we will confidentially investigate all allegations to the best of our ability and take corrective action and report to government officials as required."

Another hotline, a Labor Help Line, has been functioning at each company location since late 1986 and will continue to accommodate requests for information regarding completion of time cards and time charging. The Labor Help Lines at the various locations have been receiving a combined total of about 2,100 calls monthly, Rambeau said.



Example of DoD/Ethics/Personnel Hotlines Poster to be Displayed at All Company Locations

MANUFACTURERS HANOVER

PERSONNEL POLICIES and PROCEDURES

OTHER SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES (continued)

PIPELINE: To assist in the resolution of personal problems that may affect a staff member on the job, the Corporation has established the Public Information Program for Employees, or PIPEline. PIPEline is a telephone referral service that evaluates and aids in the resolution of a caller's problem by putting the staff member in touch with professional help. Supervisors are asked to recommend PIPEline when a personal problem is affecting work performance. The service is intended to provide information and assistance that is beyond the scope of the supervisor's time and expertise.

When a staff member calls PIPEline, the person's problem is discussed to determine whether information or referral would be appropriate. PIPEline personnel maintain files about hundreds of organizations and services in the tri-state area that are equipped to handle family and marital difficulties, alcohol, drug and health problems, consumer and civic complaints, legal and financial difficulties, etc. Staff members need not identify themselves. Any information give to PIPEline personnel is completely confidential--only statistical data is maintained.

PIPEline telephones are staffed Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Evening or weekend callers may leave a message and the call will be returned the next business day.

Organizations and services included in PIPEline files generally provide day, evening and weekend hours to accommodate working people. If an employee request time off to follow through on a PIPEline referral, Special Days may be used.

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We accomplish our mission through research, training, and publication—with emphasis on the widespread, innovative application of the behavioral sciences to the challenges facing the leaders of today and tomorrow.

OUR VALUES

Our work should serve society. We expect our work to make a difference in the quality of leadership in the world. To that end, we try to discover what is most important to do, and focus our resources for the greatest, most enduring benefit. In doing this we continually remind ourselves of the inherent worth of all people. We consider it our responsibility to be attentive to the unique needs of leaders who are women or members of minorities. To make a difference in the world and to turn ideas into action, we must be pioneers in our field, contributors of knowledge, creators of solutions, explorers of ideas, and risk-takers in behalf of society.

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We should do our work with regard for one another. We recognize the interdependence of everyone who works here, and we expect ourselves to treat one another with respect, candor, kindness, and a sense of the importance of teamwork. We should foster a spirit of service within the staff so that we may better serve the world at large.

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