

4 Things to Improve the Communication Culture at Your Church

Cornerstone Christian Fellowship is one of the fastest growing churches in the country. It has a lot of activities for the family with a very practical, biblical message. As the Executive Pastor, Marty oversees all staff and is part of the executive team which oversees every part of the church.

Communication breakdowns are a fairly common challenge in all types of interpersonal relationships, including ministry, and can be linked back to causing most problems. Marty is talking with us today about how Cornerstone has tackled the challenge of improving the communication culture among its staff.

- **Find the problems.** // The first evidence that the communication culture needed work among the staff at Cornerstone was a general sense that something wasn't right. Marty says they did the Best Christian Workplace Survey, which is a standard 55 questions regarding the workplace, plus Cornerstone could add a few extra questions specific to them. The survey revealed some consistent themes that needed to be addressed. The biggest issue was that the staff just wasn't talking with each other very well, both up and down, top to bottom, and side to side.
- **Examine the problem.** // Not everyone may realize there is a communication issue, but if some people on the staff are saying it, it should be looked at closely. Approach it ready to listen and admit, "We have a problem, so let's talk about it." At Cornerstone, everyone was sent off in their divisions and asked a series of questions. The executive team wanted to know what people thought it would look like to have a healthy culture of communication from top down, between ministries, and on their own team. They also asked about some specific examples of the existing issues. After compiling the data and looking for trends, they developed a couple of focus groups among the staff.
- **Include everyone in the solution.** // It can be difficult to get honest because no one wants to put themselves out there. As a result, no one on the executive team led the focus groups. An outside HR consultant was brought in, which provided a feeling of security and comfort. Staff were able to open up and share things they might not have said to Marty or other staff members. Marty knew as people felt safer being honest, it would contribute to a better communication culture – one where the staff understood the executive team really wanted to listen to them. As Cornerstone began implementing strategies to address the existing issues, Marty emphasized how important it is that the staff be a part of the solution. Everyone needed to own the steps the church as a whole was taking to improve the culture.
- **Communication reminders.** // Very practically speaking, when a decision or change is made, Cornerstone now makes sure everyone who needs to hear about it does. Sometimes it's just a matter of casting vision and helping people understand *why* a decision was made rather than just sharing *what* the decision was. The staff wants to get on board with these decisions and be a part of supporting them. Remind your staff leaders to communicate with their team. Explain that while a decision may be more impactful to a specific department, it does affect the entire church. That constant

conversation and sharing with your team keeps spreading the vision and will help people feel included.

You can learn more about Cornerstone Christian Fellowship at www.cornerstoneonline.com.

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