

EVOLUTION REVOLUTION

Effective communication can ease changes in processes



By **MICHAEL WAGNER, CSP**

As leaders of your snow and ice management organization, you must be prepared to adapt to a variety of internal and external influential factors. Also, you must prioritize effective communication that will positively affect any necessary change or alteration as it impacts your leadership, employees and clients.

It starts at the top

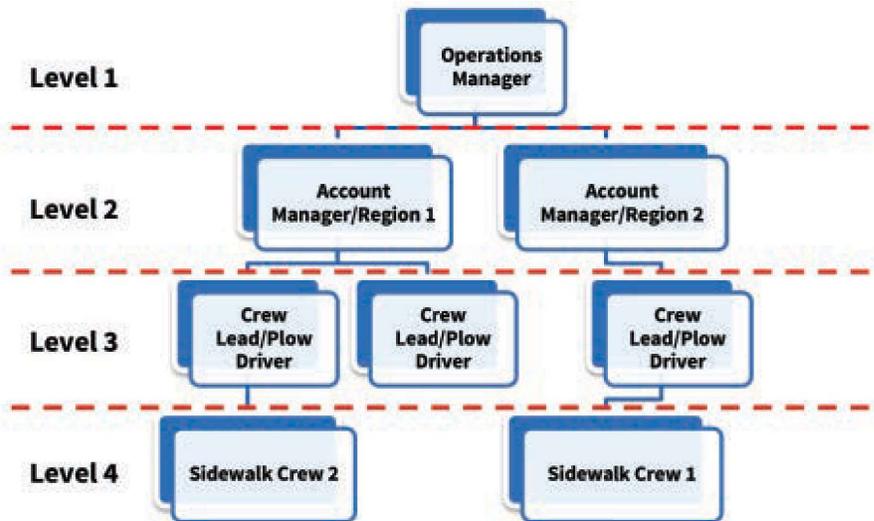
As a leader of your organization and its operations, you must be prepared to not only lead your team in the right direction but also understand how vital proper communication is whenever you're implementing change. Many change attempts fail due to lack of commitment and dedication from the leaders, as well as failure to build an environment of transparency and trust to set applicable directives.

Leaders should discuss how they want to disseminate information prior to any change effort or

COMMUNICATIONS BEST PRACTICE



A real-life example is to decide how you communicate with team members when equipment breaks down during a storm. Make sure you set up standard operating procedures (SOPs) and documented lines of communication prior to the first snow event of the season. And make sure the document and information are accessible by all within the organization and are part of your Emergency Operations Plan.



EMERGENCY REPORTING STRUCTURE: Clearly define the organizational roles, responsibilities and reporting structure prior to any winter event. As part of your emergency operations plan or SOPs, make sure all employees are aware of who they need to report to in the event of an incident or emergency.



adaptation. A quick way to lose the trust of your employees is to give them the impression that you're not being honest from the beginning, and that you might be withholding valuable information.

Influence team adaptability

One of the most recognized practices of effective leaders is leading by example. Making this a common characteristic of all leaders within your organization is vital to the overall success of the business – and it will serve as a competitive advantage in your market.

Continued on page 38

ADAPTABILITY BEST PRACTICE

➔ When discussing the operations or processes you're trying to adapt with your teams, let them know upfront why you're changing the process, and where you want to be. If you don't, you're clouding the path ahead as you seek your vision. Team members won't know what needs to be changed to achieve your objectives, and you may see redundancies throughout the process, or the trickling in of old habits and practices.

Communicate the impact of the changes and how it can create greater value and opportunity for the employees, the organization and its clients. Lastly, ensure there's a collective effort among the team members to achieve the same goal through the organization vision.

For example, when you're preparing for the snow and ice season, you may add new accounts, or there may be a personnel change. This can influence a change in operator and driver routing. Sometimes there's apprehension to these changes since employees become



comfortable and proficient with their typical routines, and some are more resistant to change. This is when you would work diligently to convey your message and its importance and relevance to achieving the organization's objectives; but make sure you're listening and responding to the concerns of those involved.

Take your Western plow to the next level...



Now offering premium alternatives to Western® OEM cutting edges.

After 34 years serving DOTs, counties, and cities, we've brought our engineered cutting edges, fast lead times, and expert service to the commercial market.

We are the only manufacturer that guarantees both wear life and total satisfaction. No matter what you run, we have the right solution for you.

Contact our experts for help finding the right edge for you: **800.294.6837**



Just ask for Jake!



WinterEquipment.com | Join us on social media:   

Videos and more info at:
WinterEquipment.com/western

 **WINTER**
The Snowplow Wear Parts Experts

Continued from page 36

When leaders learn to be adaptable, and do so without chaos, disorganization and frustration, it will increase the ability of all company personnel to do the same. How a leader communicates change to their employees will make a tremendous difference and either produce superior results or, if done improperly, may negatively consume the employees' time, decrease productivity and compound inefficient processes.

Be adaptable, and you have greater odds at helping others around you be adaptable in a productive manner.

Don't be afraid of change, failure

Influencing others through confidence in your behaviors and practices is vital to successful adaptation. As a leader, don't be afraid to fail; and don't be afraid of your employees failing either. It's important to properly handle unsuccessful endeavors by reflecting on what did and didn't work, and how you might do things differently the next time to achieve success.

The best way to influence this is not by using disciplinary action when something goes wrong but by working on your coaching skills to improve as a leader when guiding people through challenging times or failures. Communicating with



ADDRESSING FAILURE



Some failures begin with poor leadership and communication. One example might be when, during a heavy storm, a driver is rerouted to help other drivers at an unfamiliar site. When the driver arrives on site, he uses his plow blade to back-drag the snow down a loading ramp, breaks it free from the concrete and damages the ramp, the building and the plow. When the employee reports the incident, you learn that he's never plowed a site with a loading ramp and therefore thought he could use his plow since the surface was large enough for it.

This is an opportunity to reflect on where the supervisor and the plow driver may have failed. The supervisor failed by assigning a driver to a property where they had no prior experience, and the driver failed by assuming he could plow the loading ramp with a truck. To work through this problem, it would be beneficial for the supervisor to incorporate the proper procedures in their annual training, as well as taking the plow driver to the site to inspect the property, the damage and walk through the proper procedures.

2019 TRECAN CT-15 SNOWMELTER

FOR SALE
\$149,500.00



- Equipped with Remote Communications Package to view Diagnostics, GPS and Trouble Shooting.
- Training and scheduled maintenance available at your site through Trecan.
- Less than 20 hours usage & garage maintained.
- Easy to tow

Interested? Reply to Sellingequipmentnj@gmail.com

individuals means that you discuss situations while listening attentively to the voice of others and communicating to them as a leader in setting new goals and directives to accomplish the tasks at hand.

Be the driving force of success

To be effective as a leader, you must make sure you're in touch with your teams and people.

It becomes more challenging to be constantly involved with your teams when the organization grows, or you're challenged with not having enough people to keep up with the workload (both possibilities in the midst of our economic status). But make sure you're regularly present, visible and participative with your personnel. Communicate regularly and communicate with sincerity. Give your employees a voice, and make sure you let them know you're listening, and you care about the work that everyone is doing.

An organization that communicates well is one that will set high expectations for itself, and for all businesses in the industry. **SB***

Michael Wagner, CSP, is fleet and safety manager at Designscares Colorado Inc. Contact him at 303-328-5554 or mwagner@designscapes.org.