

Tips for Communicating a New Policy

Change isn't easy for most people. When you are planning to introduce a new policy or procedure, it's a good idea to expect a bit of inertia or even push back to that change. Here a few tips to help you break through the inertia so that your new policy or procedure has an opportunity to stick.

1. Take time to personally introduce the new policy or procedure to your team.
In my experience, I've found that the best way to introduce a new policy or procedure is to first do so in a live meeting. This can be an in-person meeting if your team has returned to the office or a virtual meeting if your team works remotely. Be sure to either have printed copies of the full policy for everyone or have a summary of the policy's key points. Discuss each key point and encourage questions from your team.
2. Clearly explain why you believed that there was a need to make the change.
It's imperative that your team understand why change is necessary. If possible, use industry or business trends to make the case. For example, if you are adding a new acceptable use of social media policy, talk about how easy it is to make a major mistake on social media and how that can result in a backlash not just on the individual, but on the company as well. Such a backlash could result in negative repercussions for every employee. Pull stories from the internet to use as examples.
3. Frame the policy change in terms of how it benefits your team.
When people can understand the benefits of change, they tend to be more accepting of the change. While, it isn't always easy to find true benefits for the individual from a policy change, it's important that we look for opportunities to do so. Benefits can be things such as making it easier for someone to do their job or clarifying expectations so that employees don't find themselves in unexpected problematic situations.
4. Distribute the policy in writing.
After you've made a personal pitch for the policy, follow-up by sending out the policy in writing. Send an email summarizing key points that you mentioned during your meeting with employees along with an electronic copy of the policy. Once again, encourage that anyone who has questions direct those questions to you or to the policy owner (the person who will be responsible for ensuring that the policy is followed) if that person isn't you.
5. Add the policy to your existing handbook and make sure that it is digitally accessible in a central repository accessible to all employees.

Once the policy has been introduced and distributed, be sure to update your company's employee handbook so that it includes the new policy. Your company handbook should always be easily accessible in digital format for your employees. That location could be on a company intranet, OneDrive, Dropbox or a platform like AskCoda.

6. Find ways to remind employees of the new policy two weeks, thirty days, and six months after introduction. Some ways to do this include sending out a reminder email and using pulse surveys. It's also a good idea to give employees a refresher on your company handbook annually.

For policy introduction templates, including email graphics and pulse survey ideas, check out the AskCoda policy Release Kit