

Task three: a description of how effectively different areas of the business communicate

From the above interview I have gathered that communication is very important to WhSmiths. This is regarded so highly by them because they are a very large business and have to communicate with many different branches, suppliers, purchasers and a wide range of different departments. They have their own corporate Intranet and have websites available to Internet users worldwide.

How Businesses Communicate

There are many different methods of business communication. A good business must have clear and fast communication to achieve its aims and objectives. To communicate clearly with internal and external sources they must use a various number of different ways.

Incoming:

- Information and messages
- Writing, information technology
- (Post, fax, Internet, phone)
- Enquiries, Orders, Complaints

Outgoing:

- Information and messages for external uses
- Writing, word of mouth
- (Letters, quotes, catalogues, adverts, telltales)

Internal:

- Communication between functional areas
- Word of mouth, writing, information technology
- (Paper documents, telephones, fax, Intranet, Internal e-mail, meetings)
- between departments, levels of authority, equals

Methods of communication

Oral:

- Meetings
- Conversation
- Formal interview
- Telephone
- Answering a customer inquiry
- Leaving a message, voicemail

Writing:

- Letter
- Memorandum
- Quotes
- Catalogues

- Adverts
- Notices

Information technology:

- Intranet
- E-mail (internal/external)
- Websites
- Fax
- Teleconferencing

Internal Communication

Internal communication is used within a business to communicate between different departments.

External Communication

This form of communication is used so that people within a business can communicate with people outside of the business such as suppliers, customers and the public.

The different ways of communicating are:

- Oral communication:

Telephones, pagers, meetings ect...

- Written communication:

Memos, letters, financial documents, advertisements, notices ect...

- Information technology:

Personal computers / electronic mail and fax machines ect...

Communication Flow

Communication is used to get the message across. People working in different functional areas of a business have to communicate with each other as well as with people outside the business such as customers and suppliers. So all Businesses need to communicate on a very regular basis. Communication in a business can flow in these different ways:

- In and out of the business

Between customers and suppliers

- Vertically

Between the different levels of authority

- Horizontally

Between departments or functions

Business communication

A good business must have clear and fast communication to achieve its aims and objectives. This is done in two ways:

- Internal communication

Between departments, levels of authority

- External communication

Dealing with customers, suppliers and the public

To communicate efficiently with internal and external sources there are many methods of communication each depends on the factors of the person's involved/business, its location and facilities.

Word of mouth:

- Meetings
- Conversation
- Formal interview
- Telephone
- Answering a customer inquiry
- Leaving a message

Writing:

- Letter
- Memorandum
- Quotes
- Catalogues
- Adverts
- Notices

Information technology:

- Internet
- E-mail (internal/external)
- Websites
- Fax
- Teleconferencing

All communication in any form is either incoming or outgoing. Incoming communication, which is all types of communication either externally or internally going to the business or their internal departments include inquiries, orders, complaints, information and messages. All outgoing communication, Information and messages for external uses from the business include letters, quotes, catalogues, adverts, and telltales.

Business have three different department structures each with a different type of internal communication these three structures are hierarchy, matrix or flat structure.

Hierarchy structure:

Is where there is a distinct level of authority ranging from 'managing director, directors, managers etc.) With the managing director with the most authority and say over the rest of the company. An example of a hierarchy structure is the army where there is a chain of command. Internal information has to travel down many levels of authority before it reaches its destination; this information may be lost or damaged on its way.

Flat structure:

Is similar to a hierarchy structure but where several levels of authority this increases the efficiency of internal communication by having fewer levels for information to travel through reducing the amount of information lost or confused.

Matrix structure:

A matrix structure is where all the business departments interact and cooperate without levels of authority such as the managing director that is in the flat/hierarchy structure. A matrix structure business works best in a small company because communication is more effective. All the departments communicate with each other giving one of the most effective communications between departments.

Good business communication, external and internal can benefit the business to achieve their aims and objectives by having all departments working together so that they can achieve the most efficient ways to sell and market their product and/or service. If every department is in communication with every other department there is a better chance they can work together achieving their goals as a whole rather than individual departments. Also good external communication is needed so that their customers' needs can be met and their product/service.

Internal communication in WHSmiths

WHSmiths is a multinational public limited company, which has a hierarchy business setup. Their internal communications methods include:

- Internal e-mail
- Intranet
- Department meetings
- Memos and reminders (can be sent through internal e-mail)
- Telephone conversation
- Faxes
- Letters (and other written based communication methods, invoices etc.)
- Complaints and problems (both for employees and customers)

Information that benefits the whole company is sent via internal e-mail. They also have an intranet which can be viewed by employees to keep them informed about announcements and changes in the company.

WHSmiths system is good because it is split into a wide range of departments concentrating on their own tasks and doing them to their best ability. This way tasks are achieved much more efficiently and tidily. Another of their strengths is they concentrate a lot on customer service. You can see this by how their departments are structured and the way they responded to the interview.

Their only real weaknesses are that logs must be kept for each individual department so you create a lot more paperwork and that they could end up concentrating on customer service too much and ignore other departments that need extra money or have fallen into a state of decline.

