

# Six Key Communication Strategies

## for *Savvy* Administrative Professionals

### 1) Embrace your role as a key member of the Communication Team.

- \* Accept that you have a key communication role.
- \* List the communication activities you already do.
- \* Talk with your boss about expectations.
- \* Arrive at a final list. Write them down.
- \* Put them in your job description.
- \* Abide by decisions that are made.
- \* Be confidential.
- \* Be flexible.
- \* Be the role model for how others should act.

### 2) Be an early warning system.

(What are people saying about our schools?)

- \* Note conversations: in your building, at sporting events, in the grocery store, at community events, in social settings
- \* Log issues from phone calls and email inquiries
- \* Use alerts to flag media stories and posts
- \* Monitor social media posts (School Facebook/Twitter)

### 3) Help your boss work with the media.

#### When reporters phone...

- \* Screen incoming calls.
- \* Develop a rapport.
- \* Gather information about the reason for the call.
- \* Ask: What's your deadline?
- \* Tell your boss and alert the communication office.

#### If you end up talking to the reporter:

- \* Stick to the facts.
- \* If you don't have the answer, say so.
- \* Never lie to a reporter.
- \* Never say "no comment."
- \* Don't repeat a reporter's negative statement.
- \* There is no such thing as "off the record."
- \* Always assume that your comments are being recorded or written down.

### 4) Know the basics of crisis communication.

#### Before a crisis:

- \* Gather contacts and phone numbers in an emergency kit.
- \* Store your emergency kit electronically.
- \* Set up email groups.
- \* Know the safe places in your building.

#### In the event of a crisis:

- \* In the event of a life-threatening emergency—CALL 911.
- \* Notify your superintendent and/or communication office.
- \* Tell them whatever facts you know.
- \* Ask where you should direct phone calls.
- \* Be ready to start taking or making phone calls.

#### In the event of a crisis:

- \* The media will try to get reactions from you/staff.
- \* Refer media questions to the district spokesperson.
- \* Tell students and parents just because a reporter asks them a question, doesn't mean they have to answer it.
- \* Designate a communication room for members of the media.

### 5) Mind the written word.

- \* Make it clear.
- \* Edit, edit, edit.
- \* Don't rely on spell check.
- \* Beware of auto correct.
- \* Avoid jargon. ... FTE...IEP...ISD...
- \* Be the "Person on the Street."
- \* Use simple words.
  - \* utilize → use
  - \* hold a meeting → meet
  - \* reach an agreement → agree
  - \* submit his resignation → resign
  - \* take into consideration → consider

*Try for an average of five letters per word.*

- \* Proofread everything.
- \* Ask someone else to proofread your writing!

### 6) Deliver excellent customer service.

A customer is anyone who is impacted by your actions.

- \* Find out what the customer wants.
- \* Get it.
- \* Go the extra mile.
- \* Say "thanks and come back soon!"

With an unhappy customer, you need to L.A.S.T.

- \* Listen.
- \* Apologize.
- \* Solve the problem together.
- \* Thank them for the opportunity to fix it.