

Chapter 10: Information Distribution

Overview

This chapter presents a variety of ways to distribute information, both internally and externally. Selecting an appropriate means of sending information is often the job of administrative assistants; therefore, they should be able to analyze individual situations to make the best choice.

Lecture Notes

A. Basic Principles of Information Distribution

Information is considered a valuable resource in all types of organizations; therefore, successful management and distribution of information is a critical issue.

1. **Guidelines for Information Distribution** establish appropriate means for transferring the information.

- a. Condition of the information impacts its usefulness; it may have to be converted to another format to be of value.
- b. Internal and external distribution procedures need to be established for easy transfer.
- c. Speed of transmission must be adequate for the information's usefulness; it must still be current and applicable for the receiver.
- d. Accuracy of information is very important for its usefulness.
- e. Distribution cost is determined by the volume of information, urgency, and means of transmission.

2. **Criteria for Selecting Distribution Means** should be evaluated before making choices.

- a. Type of information to be distributed and the amount are both important considerations. The means chosen for statistical information would probably be different than for a short, informal message.
- b. Speed of transmission desired varies greatly. How important is it that the information gets there quickly? How quick is quick?
- c. Format of the information impacts the transfer method. Is it written or oral information?
- d. The effect of peak work periods or "busy seasons" on the ability to transfer information causes some companies to bring in extra help at those times.
- e. Cost of information distribution varies by speed and means selected. Typically, the quicker something is needed, the more it will cost.

B. Internal Information Distribution

Decisions need to be made regarding how information will be distributed within the organization.

1. The **Intranet**, internal network, allows for electronic communication. All computers are linked to the Web server through the use of a browser.

- a. Electronic mail is used to send messages to single receivers or groups. Procedures are set to ensure that people don't abuse the service.
- b. Intranet notices make information available to people on the network quickly and effectively and save paper.

2. **Telephone Communication Systems** allow for communication, voice mail, and messages assist when the person is gone. Avoid games of telephone tag and save time.

- a. Voice messages can be effective as long as quality information is left in a message. The idea of the message is that the individual will be able to respond to it in their return call or with a specific action.
- b. Telephone messages should be accurate and complete. They should include the date, time, caller's name and phone number, and a brief message to make the return call useful.

3. **Interoffice Communication** takes place between offices or departments.

- a. Interoffice correspondence includes memos; they can be transmitted through interoffice mail. *Remind students that detailed information regarding formatting memos can be found in Chapter 9.*
- b. Face-to-face communication is often the best way to communicate. The key is proximity; it only works when the employees are located near one another.

C. External Information Distribution

Cost comparisons will help determine which means is the most cost-effective and provide the best service for the particular piece of information.

1. **Mail Services** facilitate incoming and outgoing communication; many organizations have a mail distribution center to handle the mail services.

- a. Use of ZIP+4 codes and bar codes expedite mail deliveries.
- b. Procedures for incoming mail must be set for sorting, opening, and examining the information that has arrived.
- c. Procedures for outgoing mail must be set; they may vary for different types of mail and packages. Special services have additional requirements. *Review these options in the text on pp. 337-339.* Web tools are available at www.usps.com.

2. **Private Messenger or Delivery Services** are used when a guaranteed delivery time is required. The services offered will vary, and so will the fees that are charged. Evaluate the services available in your area so they can be contacted quickly in times of need.

3. **Telecommunication Systems** are popular alternatives to mail services; the Internet offers new options as well.

- a. Western Union offers services to transfer money and send messages. Consumers can send telegrams, mailgrams, money transfers, bill payments and money orders, and international messages.
- b. Telephone technology offers many options for the office. There are many systems that companies can choose from; however, having documented

telephone procedures will make company use of the system easier and more efficient.

- c. Fax transmissions are used to transfer information over telephone lines; because the information is transmitted immediately, you can also get a rapid response.
- d. The Internet offers additional options. It links millions of individual networks for communication and Web access. E-mail enables timely communication and transfer of information. Proper netiquette (etiquette on the “net”) ensure polite and courteous communication to represent the organization. The Web allows a whole new audience to see what your organization has to offer.

Additional Resources for Students

Recommended readings (no texts should be more than two years old):

- Guffey, Mary Ellen. *Business and Administrations Communication*. South-Western Publishing Co.
- Ober, Scott. *Contemporary Business Communication*.
- Regan, Elizabeth A. and Bridget N. O’Connor. *Automating the Office – Office Systems and End-User Computing*. Macmillan City.
- Scriven, Kozell, Myers, and Hapke. *Professional Office Procedures*. Glencoe/McGraw-Hill.
- Tilton, R., J. Jackson, and S. Rigby. *The Electronic Office: Procedures and Administration*. South-Western Publishing Co.
- Wolf, P. and S. Kuiper. *Effective Communication in Business*.

Current issues of periodicals or business publications are also an excellent resource. Some of the following periodicals have an accompanying Web site.

Current Periodical	Web Address
<i>Gregg Reference Manual</i>	
<i>IAAP Complete Office Handbook</i>	http://www.iaap-hq.org/products/handbook.htm
<i>Modern Office Technology</i>	
<i>OfficePro</i>	http://www.iaap-hq.org/officepro/toc.htm
<i>The Office</i>	
<i>United States Postal Service Web site</i>	http://www.usps.gov