

Fact sheet 2-F: “Information and communication” indicator



Supplement to the Tool for Identifying Psychosocial Risk Factors in the Workplace

Indicators included in the tool

1- Work context and prevention measures in place

- A. Job and work context
- B. Illness absenteeism and presenteeism
- C. Occupational health activities or policy
- D. Activities or policy against violence and harassment
- E. Return-to-work activities or policy
- F. Work/life-balance activities or policy

2- Key components of work organization

- A. Workload
- B. Recognition at work
- C. Social support of immediate supervisors
- D. Social support of colleagues
- E. Decision-making autonomy
- F. **Information and communication**

What is information and communication in the workplace?

This indicator refers to the means put in place by management to inform and consult staff about the context of an organization and management’s vision. The frequency and content of communications and the method employed have an impact on how well-informed workers feel.

A workplace that has a “culture of secrecy”, where rumours circulate and contradict one another and where strategic information is communicated in dribs and drabs or only to a few select people generally reflects deficient information and communication.

In contrast, when announcements are made in person and allow dialogue, when managers are available to explain organizational decisions and when meetings are held frequently to report on the progress of work or the situation of an organization, workers generally feel that there is a high degree of information and communication.

Why be concerned about this?

When too little information is passed on to employees, a climate of uncertainty and distrust sets in and rumours often begin to circulate. Effective and regular distribution of information enables people to obtain accurate information and to learn in advance about and prepare for changes likely to affect their work, thereby keeping the impact of such changes to a minimum. Therefore, distribution of information helps to reduce uncertainty and anxiety.

However, the way in which information is communicated seems to have an even greater impact than its content does. Communication is part of the relational sphere. It provides opportunities for discussion by creating a space where workers' concerns can be heard, taken into consideration and addressed. Genuine and transparent communication helps to create a climate of trust between employees and management and minimizes the risk of workplace conflict. A high degree of information and communication ensures that organizational changes are managed more effectively and facilitates organizational interventions designed to prevent occupational health problems.

What practices should be implemented?

Here are some examples of organizational and management practices likely to have a positive impact on the “information and communication” indicator:

- Organize meetings of team members, departments or units, management and the organization as a whole on a regular basis to keep employees informed about the organization's financial situation, projects, current or pending changes, action plans and vision
- Limit written transmission of information and encourage communication in person. Overuse of written material (email, information bulletins, intranet, etc.) can create information overload, in addition to not being a very efficient means of communication
- Free up managers so that they can be more available to their employees

- Provide managers with training on communication and active listening
- Encourage dialogue when information is exchanged. Take time to listen to concerns and answer questions
- Always give priority to truthful and transparent communication of information. The credibility of the communicator is at stake
- Develop a clear policy on the transmission of information

References and useful links

1. Collerette, P., R. Schneider, P. Legris (2003). *La gestion du changement organisationnel – Cinquième partie : communication et changement*, ISO Management Systems, May-June.
2. Jauvin, N., R. Bourbonnais, M. Vézina, C. Brisson, S. Hegg-Deloye (2014) *Interventions to prevent mental health problems at work: Facilitating and hindering factors*, Chapter 14, in *Creating Healthy Workplaces*, edited by Biron, C., R. J. Burke & C. L. Cooper, Publications. Gower.
3. APSSAP (Association paritaire pour la santé et la sécurité du travail, secteur « Administration provinciale »). *Brochure d'information : des moyens concrets pour que l'information circule bien*. <https://apssap.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Communication.pdf>