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The 70th edition of Management Matters

Communication

Managers as Communicators: Launch of a pilot course

This Commission has made communication one of its priorities. Building on existing in-house best practices, in July 2007, the College adopted a Strategy [SEC(2007)912], which seeks to improve employee engagement and internal communication as a fundamental underpinning for our external communication efforts. After all, external and internal communication are two sides of the same coin,

This policy approach recognises that managers **at every level**, from team leaders to Directors-General, have **important responsibilities** in sustaining and improving the communication health of the organisation.

Organisational research consistently shows that the conduct and skill of managers is the most critical determinant of staff engagement and confidence. Similarly, communication audits of staff in organisations across the world all point to interaction with their **managers as the most preferred channel of communication**, even if effectiveness varies considerably.

Across a complex organisation, there needs to be some commonality of approach and understanding of what makes for effective communication – interpersonal, team or inter-team. Like any aspect of organisational health, it needs to be worked at.

As such, ADMIN A3 is piloting a new course on Internal Communication for managers. The course has been designed with middle and senior managers in mind, as they have the greatest responsibility as **role models**. They also have the most to lose if their Directorates or teams are operating ineffectively due to communication deficits – especially if they are not aware of the collateral damage being caused. Conversely, they have the most to gain if they lead motivated and productive teams. In high-performing Institutions like the Commission, managerial communication skills are not an optional extra - they are the key to personal and organisational success.

The first two-day pilot sessions will take place on **3rd-4th December 2007** and on **14-15th January 2008**. It is vitally important to have the right people in this course, so Training Coordinators will be screening the requests introduced by staff from their respective DGs. Remember that this course is designed for middle and senior managers in the organisation - requests from staff below Head of Unit level will not be accepted.

The course will be delivered in **English** and will take a maximum of 15 participants. Below you will find a description of this course, together with the link to Syslog for registration. For more information on this particular course, please contact the course manager, Anne Jung.

Course content:

The course provides a thorough grounding over two days in

- the basic principles of effective internal communication in organisations
- the role that managers play in the communication system, and the impact they have
- the challenges and opportunities to improve internal communication in the Commission
- creating the environment for healthy internal working relationships and information flows – within and between teams
- methods of communication – upwards, downwards and laterally – and the managers' role in these
- seeking and giving feedback – vital for learning and improving performance, but often an area of sensitivity
- forming communication plans that enhance the success of initiatives and policies
- different types of 'message', and what works where
- simple research and audit tools to underpin communication activity, measure success and enable improvement
- how internal and external communication should interrelate.

Practical, everyday challenges like reducing email overload, ensuring meetings are productive, and knowing how to make best use of intranet and publications will naturally be covered, as well as how to manage in conditions of change or crisis. The cumulative effect of managers' actions determine how any organisation performs in these areas.

The course will provide opportunities to practice some of the concepts being covered, to learn from and exchange with colleagues across the organisation, and to identify any further personal training needs to enhance managerial performance.

How to enrol (links to Syslog)

[General description \(course content\)](#)

[3rd-4th December 2007 session](#)

[14-15th January 2008 session](#)

Manuela Veiga, DG ADMIN A3 "Training and Learning Development"

Financial Management

Financing decisions: Get your 2008 decision adopted now!

If you are managing money, you know that getting your financing decision adopted by the College is the 1st step in the implementation of operational expenditure.

Until your financing decision is adopted, you **cannot launch any calls** for tender or calls for proposals or any other action to start implementing your operational budget. Your DG may have the tradition to prepare their financing decisions at the beginning of the

budget implementation year. If you follow this timetable, this means for example that you cannot launch your calls for proposals any earlier than the first quarter of the year, resulting in your award decisions being taken during or after the summer and commitments being made towards the end of the year.

You might be looking for ways to solve this problem. Did you know that it is possible to prepare the financing decision and **get it adopted already now**, before the budget is adopted? This will allow you to launch your calls before the end of the year and pave the way for a flying start in 2008. You can then **avoid** getting trapped in the usual **end-of-the-year rush**.

DG Budget has long been encouraging DGs to choose this option. Since 1st May this year, early adoption of financing decisions and early launch of calls are now officially enshrined in [Art 166.1 and 167.2 of the implementing rules](#).

To provide you with the information you need, the Central Financial Service have recently issued a [new circular](#) on this subject and a [presentation](#) in the form of frequently asked questions on [BudgWeb](#). We hope this will be useful to you and wish you good luck with your financial management.

Silvia Mora, DG BUDG "BudgWeb, Financial Training, Helpdesk"

European Administrative School

New range of learning opportunities

The European Administrative School, or EAS, has taken a further step in its development when its management board approved at its meeting of 19th October an extended range of programmes for new staff and in the field of management training.

It was at the board's earlier request to expand its courses in these areas that the EAS had entered into discussions with the institutions' training units about where its contribution would be most useful.

There will be a range of interlinking programmes for staff who in one way or another manage people:

- Team leaders, whatever their grade or function
- Staff who have management potential
- Newly-appointed Heads of Unit
- Heads of Unit in post for 1-5 years
- More experienced Heads of Unit

These programmes will come on stream progressively throughout 2008 and will **replace** the current **Management Training Programme** (the MTP) which comes to an end in April. More detailed information about who can apply will be made available when dates for the programmes are advertised.

New staff will be able to benefit from an extended range of skills-based courses during the **early years of their careers**. In cooperation with the institutions' training units, the EAS has identified a number of basic skills that most staff need to possess in order to work effectively. The courses will enable participants to build on what they learn during the "Key Skills for New Staff" course organised by the EAS and compulsory for all new officials, and have also been inspired by the very successful certification training programme. It will be up to individual line managers to decide which courses their new staff need to follow and when would be the best time for them to do so. It is planned to offer these courses **from autumn next year**.

Keep a lookout for further details about all these programmes and on the EAS in general on their informative [website](#).

David Walker, Director of the EAS

Strategic Planning and Programming

Google has it, IBM has it, and the Commission has it too?

Communities of Practice are informal places where colleagues working in the same field of activity in different DGs can freely exchange and learn from each other in a self-organising way.

Such communities have **existed** in the Commission without this formal name. Now they are slowly emerging or are being newly founded, under the **fresh impetus** provided by an entrepreneurial team in ADMIN A/3.

"... If we believe that people in organisations contribute to organisational goals by participating inventively in practices that can never be fully captured by institutionalised processes... we will have to value the work of community building"
Etienne Wenger

Be **courageous**, and step into the world of a new reality of a changing organisation. You might find the place within you, from which you can truly contribute.

The Strategic Planning and Programming network (SPP for short) is a formal network of correspondents from all DGs. We hold efficient meetings, with tight agendas and tangible results. The machinery is working well. After **five years** of existence of the network, we had the idea to propose our fellow network members an opportunity to go further in deepening issues of common interest. Communities of Practice! This new name for an age-old concept seemed to be something we could offer our network members; for a truer exchange of their **art** and **expertise**.

On 9th October we met on a mezzanine in the Berlaymont, in armchairs and sofas around and small tables. The network members who showed up were those who felt the need for this exchange.

During our preparation of the meeting, we had met the manifestations of **culture clash**, precisely as predicted by our coaches: You need *coffee tables* for a meeting? What is the agenda? Is this a *private* meeting?

True, there was no visible agenda with bullet points. But an invisible one, carefully prepared. The course of events was known to some members of the community, and slowly unfolded. The **process** is important, we had been told. Colleagues relaxed, started to feel comfortable. The unconventional meeting space and the informal atmosphere had their effect. We started experiencing learning in action

Everyone contributed a question; together we clustered them around themes, and ranked them according to our interest, and off we went. Discussions in small groups of four, each with a "table host" who stayed with the question throughout the event. **No censorship**, no minutes, and: no pre-defined results. Lots of space for free thinking, associations, linking of topics. Thoughts were scribbled on flipcharts sheets used as tablecloths. After 25 minutes the "travellers" moved to the next table, the next question, another facet of the field many knew so well. From the host at our new table, we heard what the previous round at this table had achieved. Then we got started again: discovered new links, brought fresh experience from our practice, and identified or solved open questions. After a further 25 minutes, **time to move again**. Exposed to a new table and a different subject, the will was almost there to solve all the problems at once.

Effortless new links were being made. Colleagues were thriving with this new form; it was a pleasure to see them enjoy themselves, seeing their daily work from the outside. The conversational process we used is called "World café". This recipe, combined with the enthusiastic participation of curious colleagues who want to learn from each other, seemed like a **magic formula**.

Our Community of Practice is still too new for us to report results in this issue. Besides, the community members will decide how to handle those. However we wanted you to hear about our experience, and we will keep you posted.

Ursula Hillbrand, SG C1 "Strategic Planning & Programming"

Informatics

SECEM – SECure EMail

SECEM, the secure e-mail system, allows you to send an e-mail with electronic signature and/or encryption. 9,500 certificates have already been created.

The advantages of secure e-mail SECEM are:

- **Confidentiality:** To be certain that the data will only be accessible to person(s) identified by the sender.
- **Integrity:** Know that the e-mail cannot be changed or altered during transmission.
- **Authentication:** Be able to positively authenticate the sender of the e-mail.
- **Non-disclaimer:** The sender cannot later deny the transmission of a message.

You should therefore use secure e-mail when your message contains **sensitive documents** such as medical data, personal files or financial information, calls for tenders, etc.

Please note that the exchange of secure e-mail is also possible with recipients **outside** the Commission. A prior exchange of public keys is all that is required.

You should sign your e-mail electronically when the integrity of the message must be guaranteed or when there is a need to assure the recipient that you are the true sender. The Commission regards a digitally signed e-mail to be as legally binding as a handwritten signature

Call your LRA (Local Registration Authority) for initiating the certificates creation procedure.

Commission at the HQ Delegations

Please note that the use of SECEM is **not acceptable for classified documents** such as RESTREINT UE, CONFIDENTIEL UE, SECRET UE or TRÈS SECRET UE/EU TOP SECRET. More information can be found in Security Notices 2, 4 and 4A.

Pierre André, DG ADMIN DS 5 "Co-ordination and IT security"

Career

Enhancing potentials with EC AST Network



The AST Network launches a communication campaign. Its main aim is to inform the maximum number of Commission staff about the AST Network's activities, achievements and benefits.

The EC AST Network, whether at Commission level or at DG/Service level, endeavours to make the Commission an enjoyable place to work; this is not just a benefit for AST staff but for the Commission as a whole and could ultimately lead to happier, more efficient staff. The support provided by managers at all levels is of vital importance to the Network, as was underlined by both Vice-President **Kallas** and Secretary-General Catherine **Day** in their speeches at the launch event of the campaign on 16th October 2007.

As Catherine Day remarked: "The AST Network is a very human interacting way to get colleagues to come together. They can talk about how we can improve the working environment in the Commission. It is a real asset in an organisation whose **only asset is the people.**"

The inter-service group was created with the aim of discussing and proposing initiatives to ASTs and to management to enhance job satisfaction and efficiency of AST staff. The Network benefits from ongoing support from the Commission hierarchy.

Reiterating his support, Siim Kallas stated: "The AST Network has provided very good and important input to administrative solutions."

Formally established in 2002, the Network has achieved many successes. We work closely with the ADMIN Training Unit and this cooperation has led to the creation of several training courses, e.g. **Managing Yourself** and the **very successful Secretaries Training Path**. In pursuit of our objectives, the Network has also established excellent cooperation with the SCOP (Career Guidance Central Office) unit of DG ADMIN and with other services such as the ReLOP Network, the COFO and ReFOI networks, etc.

Providing a lot of benefits for the participants, the Network offers good opportunities for personal and professional development through learning new tasks that are not usually part of daily work routines. The support and encouragement of managers for staff participation in AST activities benefits all, leading to **increased efficiency and motivation**. We rely on the **support of line managers** to encourage their AST staff to take part in our proactive and innovative activities.

The Network also wants to help by developing and proposing new working methods, procedures and trainings to management. In some DGs, AST Networks are now invited to brainstorming exercises to improve human resource policies and working procedures.

To help Commission staff understand better the Network's objectives and benefits, the Communication Strategy has 3 major aims:

- to disseminate clear information on the AST Network;
- to inform all AST newcomers;
- to get more hierarchical support.

For more information please visit our recently [redesigned website](#).

Patricia Libert, EC AST Network Committee

Séance de rattrapage

Nominations

Jean-Noël Durvy est nommé directeur de la direction D « Politique de l'innovation » de la DG ENTR.

Kjell Larsson est nommé directeur de la direction C « Soutien opérationnel et politique » de l'OLAF.

Maciej Popowski est nommé directeur de la direction « Politique de développement de l'UE : questions horizontales » de la DG DEV.

Rudolf Niessler est nommé directeur de la direction « Coopération territoriale, actions urbaines et régions ultrapériphériques » de la DG REGIO.

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We would like to inform our readers that the articles published in Management Matters reflect the opinion of the respective authors.

The newsletter is intended for managers but other staff members are [welcome to subscribe](#).