

Audit of Internal Communications at TSB



Final Report
April 2004

Hallux Consulting Inc.



Our report:

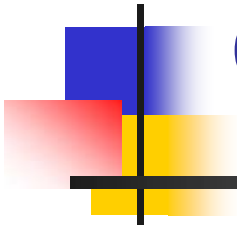
- Examines the current state of internal communications at the TSB
- Assesses the efficiency and effectiveness of TSB internal communications activities
- Identifies TSB best practices
- Examines practices in 3 other agencies
- Identifies opportunities for improvement and makes recommendations



Methodology

- To conduct this audit, we:
 - reviewed key TSB documents
 - interviewed 18 TSB employees, including executives, the Manager of Communications, and 8 front-line employees
 - discussed internal communications with the Public Service Employee Survey Follow-Up Committee
 - examined internal communications practices in 3 agencies:
 - Canadian Transportation Agency
 - Canadian Human Rights Commission
 - Competition Bureau

The current state of internal communications





Current state of internal communications

- Internal communications is challenging at TSB:
 - modal “silos”
 - headquarters and regional offices
 - investigators and non-investigators
- TSB recognizes this challenge:
 - Business Plan identified internal communications as priority
 - Public Service Employee Survey Follow-Up Committee is tracking progress
 - Major agenda item during Managers’ Conference
 - Selected for study by Audit Committee
- These initiatives have set expectations for improvements in internal communications



Current state (continued):

- TSB 2003-2004 Business Plan identified these initiatives to improve internal communications:
 - Internal communications plan for Business Plan
 - Employee/manager orientation program
 - Revised employee exit feedback process
 - Revised performance discussion / evaluation process
- TSB has implemented or is implementing these initiatives with some delays



Current state (continued):

- The Public Service Employee Survey Follow-Up Committee identified these remaining shortcomings in December 2003:
 - Intranet not used effectively
 - No strategic and integrated approach to internal communications
 - The Senior Management Committee should identify a focal point to coordinate efforts
 - Information should be shared broadly rather than provided only to selected audiences
- TSB has not yet acted to address these issues



Current state (continued):

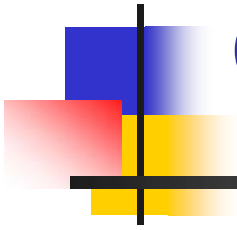
- TSB is communicating actively:
 - Business Plan communications initiatives
 - Managers' Conferences
 - Administrative Officers' Conference
 - Regional visits by executives
 - Executive Director meetings with new staff
 - Newsletters
 - Intranet
 - Conference calls
 - E-mails
 - Staff meetings at all levels



Current state (continued):

- Relevant factors affecting internal communications:
 - A senior communicator is not at Senior Management Committee meetings
 - Communications Division is rebuilding, coping with higher priority operational demands
 - Resource constraints have prevented some proposed internal communications initiatives from proceeding
 - Governance initiative could alter decision-making processes and structures
 - New corporate planning position could present opportunities to strengthen internal communications related to corporate planning

Efficiency and effectiveness of TSB internal communications





Efficiency and effectiveness

- Overall assessment of existing internal communications activities:
 - Use of a range of vehicles and methods is appropriate as people have different needs, preferences
 - Interviews suggest majority of front-line employees feel they are informed about issues affecting their work, and have a say in decisions and actions that impact their work
 - Managers say they are well informed and have a say; appear to take communications responsibilities seriously
 - Range of compliments/complaints/suggestions, but no consensus on whether major problems exist



Efficiency and effectiveness (continued)

TSB communications methods

- Face-to-face
- Intranet
- E-mail
- Newsletters



Efficiency and effectiveness (continued)

Face-to-face communication

- TSB investments in internal communications appropriately emphasize this essential tool for two-way communications
 - Regional visits
 - Managers' and Administrative Officers' conferences
 - Executive Director meetings with new staff
 - Staff meetings
 - Public Service Employee Survey Follow-up Committee
- Employees speak highly of these activities



Efficiency and effectiveness (continued)

Intranet

- Some employees describe it as poorly structured, out of date, but many see it as a useful source of information, and some use it “all the time”
- One manager set out contents for proposed online Manager’s Handbook; recommended training on Intranet for managers, and an Administrative Officer’s Handbook
- A proposed project to enhance Intranet has not received funding



Efficiency and effectiveness (continued)

E-mails

- Employees “bombed” with e-mails, described as annoying, top down, or (from regional perspective) too often focused on Head Office interests
- Concerns that too many send e-mails to “all staff”, that important information is not sent to all who need to know, that distribution lists are inadequate
- E-mail generally accepted as a necessary tool for communicating some types of information



Efficiency and effectiveness (continued)

Newsletters

- Corporate Services, Air Investigations, Human Performance Division, Information Technology Division publish newsletters
- Reaction largely positive, though concerns expressed about sustainability, value, need for several separate newsletters, reinforcement of silos
- None displays Canada workmark, as required by Government Communications Policy
- Mixed views on need for a corporate newsletter



Best practices



Best practices within TSB

- Based on comments from TSB employees and Hallux knowledge of practices elsewhere, TSB best practices in internal communications include:
 - Emphasis on face-to-face and two-way communications
 - Ongoing management and employee involvement in response to public service employee survey results
 - Corporate support for managers (e.g. Business Plan presentations, Values and Ethics package)
 - Regional representation on most TSB committees
 - Addition of “What’s New” section on Intranet
 - Posting of Senior Management Committee minutes on Intranet



Practices in other agencies

Canadian Transportation Agency

- Communications Directorate is responsible for internal communications
- An Information Services (IS-03) employee works full time on internal communications, supports Corporate Services
- Director of Communications sits on executive committee
- Monthly electronic newsletter
- Electronic events calendar



Practices in other agencies (continued)

Canadian Human Rights Commission

- New Communications Branch (April 2004) responsible for internal communications
- Director of Communications sits on executive committee
- Quarterly online newsletter; monthly message from Chief Commissioner
- Workplace Advisory Committee (co-chaired by Director of Communications and employee representative) provides feedback on internal communications



Practices in other agencies (continued)

Competition Bureau

- Managers responsible for internal communications
- Assistant Commissioner, Communications sits on executive committee
- One officer in Communications Branch spends one-third of time on internal communications, supports Corporate Services
- Communications publishes new online webmagazine
- Intranet (maintained by Communications) is a key tool



Practices in other agencies (continued)

Observations

- Communications attends executive committee, plays important role in internal communications
- None of the 3 agencies has a current internal communications plan/strategy
 - The Canadian Human Rights Commission has an Internal and External Communications Framework
- None has an internal communications budget
- All have corporate publications



Areas for improvement



Areas for improvement

- TSB can strengthen internal communications by taking action in 3 areas:
 - Improve the integration of internal communications into the decision-making process
 - Make better use of communications skills and knowledge
 - Strengthen some TSB communications tools



Areas for improvement (continued)

- Improve the integration of internal communications into the decision-making process:
 - Internal communications should not be seen as an end in itself, but as a means of achieving business objectives
 - Internal communications should not be divorced from external communications, as both are often needed in concert to achieve business objectives
 - The key questions are “Who do we need to consult?” about a particular business issue and “Who needs to know?” about a particular business issue



Areas for improvement (continued)

- Recommendations for integrating internal communications into the decision-making process:
 - Prepare an annual corporate communications strategy -- internal and external -- linked to the corporate planning process
 - Environmental assessment, audiences, key messages, activities
 - Prepare individual communications plans to set out how communications tools and techniques will be used to help achieve specific business objectives, with performance indicators such as level of awareness
 - Make managers accountable for internal communications, provide them with improved tools to communicate



Areas for improvement (continued)

- Make better use of communications skills and knowledge:
 - Trained and experienced communications professionals bring a set of skills and knowledge to an organization
 - TSB can tap into the skills and knowledge of its communications people more effectively than it is at present
 - The key issues are whether senior management has ready access to communications advice, and whether manager of communications has ready access to the executive director
 - The reporting relationship of the manager of communications is of secondary importance



Areas for improvement (continued)

- Recommendations for making better use of communications skills and knowledge:
 - Invite manager of communications to participate in all Senior Management Committee meetings, to advise on internal and external communications
 - Place a communications strategist on other key committees, to advise on internal and external communications
 - Strengthen relationship between Communications and Corporate Services, which is a key player in most internal communications activities



Areas for improvement (continued)

- Strengthen some TSB communications tools:
 - Intranet
 - E-mail
 - Newsletters



Areas for improvement (continued)

- Intranet:
 - Intranet is already an important source of information for managers and employees, but many called for improvement
 - In addition to reorganizing and cleaning up the site, consider:
 - Manager's Handbook, containing policies, human resources information, financial information, etc.
 - Events calendar, showing both external and internal events and where appropriate a contact person



Areas for improvement (continued)

- E-mail:
 - There is no easy fix for complaints about e-mail volumes
 - Two measures could help make a small difference:
 - Guidelines for employees on the use of e-mails (these could likely be picked up from another department)
 - Creation of additional internal e-mail distribution lists, so employees are less likely to send to “all staff”, or have to spend time creating their own lists



Areas for improvement (continued)

- Newsletters:
 - Existing newsletters show TSB staff want to communicate, and discouraging them would send the wrong signal
 - A new corporate newsletter could help bridge “silos”, prove useful for corporate messaging, but would require significant investment
 - An alternative would be to use the existing Corporate Services newsletter for broader corporate purposes
 - updates on Business Plan priorities
 - status of Public Service Employee Survey Committee work, etc.
 - TSB participation in interdepartmental Newsletter Editors Network could provide useful ideas



Some final observations

- TSB's internal communications efforts, while not perfect, are largely sound for a small agency with the challenges of regions and modes
- The emphasis on face-to-face communication is excellent and should be maintained
- To meet expectations for improvements, inform staff of changes that result from this audit
- Evaluate future internal communications efforts on the extent to which they help achieve corporate objectives