f: WGK

"to tap a great reservoir of creative opinions and suggestions . . . ."

(7) OBC features a series of campaigns, each of which is designed to achieve a specific, carefully defined objective. Its subject is selected by the communication corps and a six-month plan is worked out in advance. (Examples: "Focus on Quality" increased employee awareness of quality workmanship; "Profit and Progress" demonstrated the need for corporate profits and their relationship to job security.)

(8) Periodic surveys of employees' views are conducted, with the help of outside consultants, by mail, telephone, or personal interview.

Results? Dover reports good progress, indicated by both personal observation and opinion surveys. He cites, for example, a comparison of answers to major surveys made just before OBC began and last December (next survey of comparable scope is scheduled for 1966). The proportion of respondents who said that they found themselves getting information through the company management rather than outside sources increased by 57 percent. There was a 19 percent increase in the proportion which considered management's statements to be credible. And the percentage of those who expressed overall satisfaction with the total communication effort more than doubled.

The specially themed campaigns have paid off, too. For instance, a survey reveals that "Profit and Progress" cut the average employee's estimate of the size of Chrysler's profits in half and doubled the percentage of respondents who said that the profit is "not enough." Interestingly, Dover estimates that "the long-term measurable dollar savings" produced by just one phase of OBC—the Employee Suggestion System—"will soon equal OBC's total annual budget."

For Townsend's active endorsement and support of OBC, he was honored in 1965 with the International Conference of Industrial Editors' Communicator- of-the-Year award. In accepting, he termed the program "an important contributing factor to profit and progress."

Employee communications at a Monsanto Chemical Company plant

Employee communications at the William G. Krummrich Plant of Monsanto Chemical Company provided the plant's 2,000 employees with two-way channels of communication. Employees received frequent bulletins on the job and at their homes, and bulletin boards and recorded messages provided additional information. The company included "Speak Up" forms with employee bulletins to encourage workers to communicate with management.

December 30, 1963

Communication within an organization should flow efficiently from management down to the employee, and, equally important, from the latter up. Rarely is this handled with such thoroughness, little cost, and effectiveness as at the William G. Krummrich Plant (WGK) of Monsanto Chemical Company (Monsanto, Illinois.). Its program was set up about eighteen months ago by Hal S. Breslow, Communication and Training Supervisor at the 2,000-employee installation. (He also guides WGK's community and public relations.)

What are the elements which have made this program so successful that it won this year's American Association of Industrial Editors' top award? A big budget? Hardly, since (exclusive of salary costs) only about $7,000 a year is spent. A large staff? It's conducted by Breslow with the aid of just one assistant and a secretary. (While he can call for help from Monsanto PR headquarters in St. Louis, this consists chiefly of receiving material which he adapts when appropriate.)

From the beginning, Breslow was blessed with a communications-oriented management, one which understands and accepts a realistic approach to the problem of developing and maintaining employee morale and loyalty. It was clearly established that (1) the communicator would have to know in detail the thinking of management and have its full support; (2) a wide variety of channels would be used to transmit messages; (3) such communications would be couched in simple terms and addressed to executives and rank-and-file

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employees alike; (4) information would flow freely down from the supervisory to the worker level and employees would be given equal opportunity (and encouraged to use it) to transmit opinions up to middle and top management; and (5) the program would continue to justify its existence only so long as it continued to clarify, project, and win support for WGK's objectives.

Close liaison with management is arranged by having Breslow participate in all of the plant manager's staff meetings.

Standard forms of written communications are used, but, in almost every case, they have an unusual approach or feature.

A one-page bulletin, multilithed on both sides, is placed daily (by 10:30 a.m.) on distribution racks in the cafeteria and copies of it are posted on bulletin boards. It generally includes the morning's news headlines, a weather report, a "chuckle," one salient bit of information about the company or "your chemical industry," the latest figure on non-accident man hours, employees' service anniversaries, and lost and found items.

Every Friday morning, an additional single-sheet bulletin is similarly distributed at the plant. It is also delivered by mail on Saturday mornings to each employee's home. This weekly, obviously designed for family readership, makes generous use of employee photos to stimulate reader interest. Its editorial content is designed primarily to educate employees on plant and company policies.

Also sent to the home is a four-page quarterly. This features company growth and employee achievement, demonstrated through photos and copy. Another feature is a column in which an interviewer presents answers of both management and workers to a specific question about a company matter.

Letters addressed from management to employees at their homes are sent only to convey particularly important and timely information and are used sparingly. To achieve maximum receptivity, the following practices have been established: letters, kept simple and to the point, are cleared with the Communication Department; in every case they are personalized.

Bulletin boards carry not only the daily bulletin but also fresh, live, positive material. Portable, they can be moved to different locations.

Three times a day (8:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., and 4:00 p.m.) recorded messages (available to employees who dial 222) bring up-to-the-minute items on weather and company news, including the price of Monsanto stock. Frequently, there's a reminder to record on tape (by dialing 666) "any comments, ideas, or suggestions on your mind."

The supervisors are scrupulously informed in advance of every employee message to be communicated, whether by bulletin, letter, or recording. In the case of the weekly bulletins, for example, Breslow prepares, immediately after the Wednesday staff meeting, a single, printed-on-two-sides sheet of questions and answers dealing with the contents of the coming Friday's issue, and gets it in the hands of the supervisors on Thursday.

A productive employee-to-management communications channel is a bright yellow "Speak Up" form. This is included with all communications sent to the worker's home and provides space for "WGK employees and members of their families" to direct to the plant manager (anonymously, if desired) any suggestions, questions, criticisms, or comments. These are acknowledged by the manager by letter or are discussed, on request, with the sender in person.

While WGK continues to develop new information channels and refine old ones, the formal, scheduled face-to-face meeting remains, in Breslow's words, "the most effective device" of all employee communications. Each supervisor is urged to stage one such meeting weekly.

A major contribution to WGK's successful program has been Breslow's no-nonsense definition of the role of the Communication Department: "It's not in the newspaper business. It's not in the entertainment field. It's right smack in the middle of the chemical business along with the line foreman, supervisor, and production superintendent."

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