

Increasing Communication between Employees at Siegle Properties B.C. Ltd.

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Abstract

Increasing productivity is essential for a fast-paced work environment at Siegle Properties. To increase productivity, increasing communication within the office is essential where staff can exchange information on clients and projects. This report utilizes surveys and interviews to investigate various ways to increase communication within the office. Moreover, this report investigates whether the arrival of new employees has impacted productivity levels. Interviews conducted with a strata manager, one of the senior staff and a new employee give insight on any challenges they are facing at the office and recommendations they may have to solve them. Results from 25 survey responses reveal that the arrival of the new employees has caused an increased workload for senior staff, hence impacting productivity levels. Moreover, survey responses reveal the training program for new employees needs improvement. To increase communication at Siegle Properties, the following should be considered:

- Assigning a mentor to each new employee
- Implement weekly meetings for each department
- Implement weekly meetings for the strata and rental department

Introduction

Siegle Properties B.C. Ltd. is a privately owned property management company that has been in business for over 28 years. They have always been complimented for their efficiency when assisting owners and tenants. Recently, many complaints of not being assisted promptly have been received. Not only are complaints being received from clients, but many strata council members have also filed complaints against Siegle Properties of not meeting deadlines when preparing files for them. As numerous complaints are being received, Siegle Properties risks losing their management rights for strata plans they currently manage.

Purpose of the Study

One possible reason for the numerous complaints may be the issue of communication between employees. Research shows differing levels of communication can impact productivity levels (Clampitt and Down 8). Hence, the purpose of this report is to identify strategies to increase communication between employees. Since new employees are being trained on the job, they have a vague understanding of their working environment. Often, they tend to sit and wait to be assigned tasks to work on when they have finished their work. Increasing communication will allow new employees to have a clear idea of the workflow procedures at Siegle Properties as information about clients and projects can be shared. New employees can use that information to find work to do which will increase productivity. Currently, the senior staff is told to review the work done by the new employees. By increasing communication between employees, they can share tips with each other when working on assignments which will increase efficiency and productivity.

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Methods

To determine what changes are necessary to increase communication between employees, input from the senior staff, new employees and a strata manager is essential. By gathering their perspective on the current situation, they can provide suggestions on potential changes to increase communication levels at the office.

Surveys were sent to all the senior staff and new employees at Siegle Properties. Surveys sent to the senior staff were focused on their workload and surveys sent to the new employees were focused on their clarity of work procedures. In addition to surveys, an interview was conducted with one of the senior staff, a new employee and a strata manager. The interviews with one of the senior staff and a new employee are to gain in-depth information on their perspective of the current situation at the office. The interview with the strata manager is to get his perspective on the current situation at the office and to get his opinion on what is causing a rise in complaints from clients.

Data Analysis

A total of 17 senior staff and 8 new employees participated in this study. The strata department has a total of 9 senior staff and 4 new employees, whereas the rental department only has 8 senior staff and 4 new employees. The surveys were voluntary and all participants responded to all the questions.

Results from the Survey Sent to Senior Staff

The responses for the second question of the survey for both departments had a general consensus that due to the arrivals of new employees, the workload has increased. Figure 1 shows that from both departments around 87-89% of the senior staff found that their workload has increased due to the arrival of new employees. Moreover, when asked to explain their choice,

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86% said the reason was that they had to review the work of the new employees and the remaining 14% said that they had to deal with complaints.

On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate the amount of workload has changed due to the arrival of new employees (1 = decreased, 5 = increased):

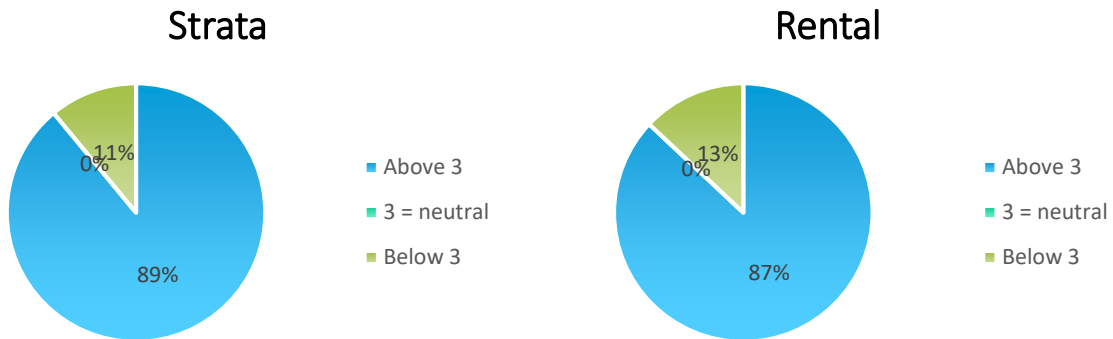


Figure 1: Senior Staff Survey Question #2

Figure 2 shows the results for the third and fourth questions of the survey. The results are the exact same for both questions where 89% of the senior staff from the strata department have often received complaints from clients and managers. However, only 12% of the senior staff from the rental department received complaints from clients and managers. The remaining 88% of the senior staff from the rental department only either sometimes or rarely receive complaints.

Complaints from clients about timeliness of assistance and complaints from managers about timeliness of assignments occur:

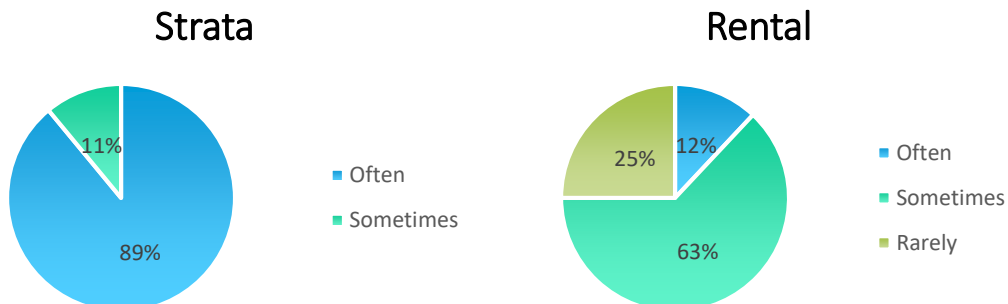


Figure 2: Senior Staff Survey Question #3 and #4

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Figure 3 shows the results of the fifth question of the survey. The two departments were in consensus that the new employees are not that helpful as around 88-89% of the senior staff rated them below 3. Moreover, when asked to explain their choice, all senior staff said that the new employees were often confused about how to do assignments and were prone to making errors.

On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate the helpfulness of new employees (1 = not helpful, 5 = very helpful):

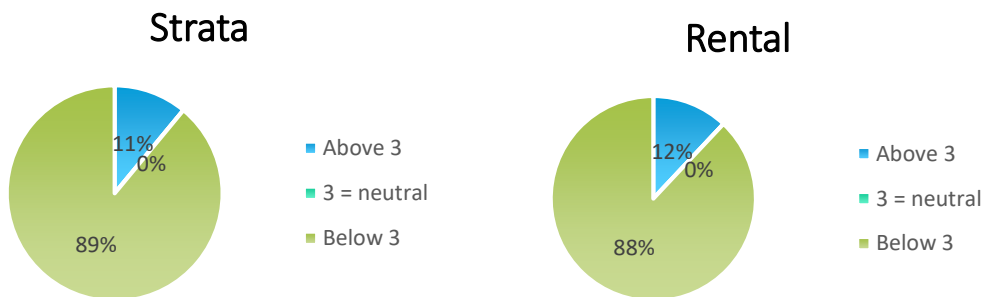


Figure 3: Senior Staff Survey Question #5

Figure 4 shows the results for the last question of the survey. This question gains insights on the senior staff as they are asked to choose one option out of three solutions proposed to increase productivity. Both departments were in consensus to assign a mentor to each new employee.

If only one option can be implemented, which one should it be?

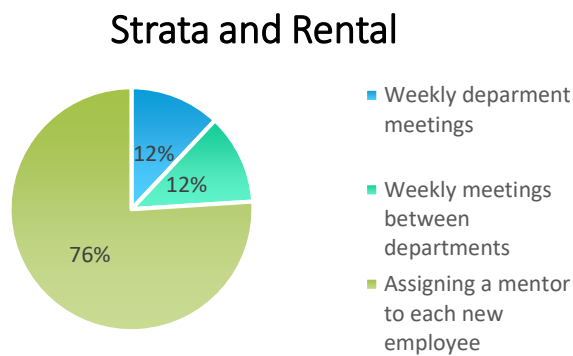


Figure 4: Senior Staff Survey Question #6

Results from the Survey Sent to New Employees

Figure 5 shows the results of the second question of the survey. The majority of the new employees that joined the strata department are confused when working on assignments, whereas the new employees that joined the rental department are confident when working on assignments. When asked to explain their choice, the new employees of the strata department all mentioned that there were too many procedures to memorize when working on assignments. The new employees of the rental departments all mentioned that their assignments were straightforward, hence they feel confident when working on assignments.

On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate the confidence level when working on assignments (1 = confused, 5 = confident):

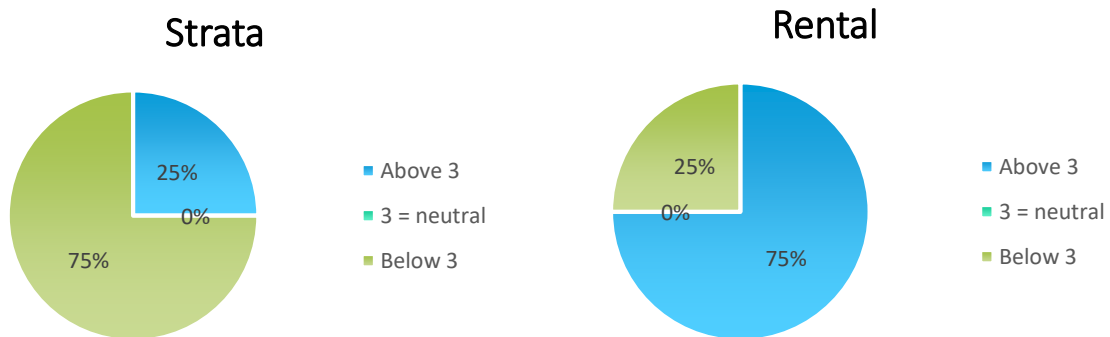


Figure 5: New Employee Survey Question #2

Figure 6 shows the results of the third question of the survey where 63% of the new employees chose the rental department and explained that due to straightforward procedures, assignments are easily completed. The remaining 37% chose the strata department and explained their choice saying the work is more challenging due to the variety of clients they handle each day.

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If there was a choice to pick which assignments to work on, which department is preferred? Why that department?

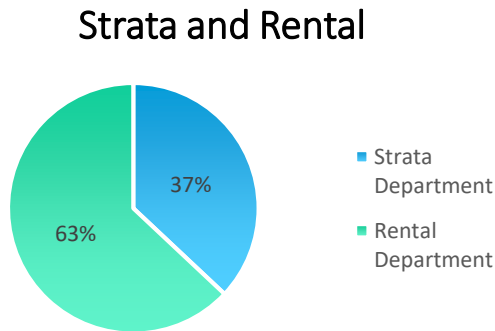


Figure 6: New Employee Survey Question #3

Figure 7 shows the results of the fourth question of the survey. All the new employees from the strata department find that there are little to no resources when working on an assignment. However, the results from the new employees from the rental department show that there are adequate to many resources for them to turn to when working on assignments.

On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate the amount of resources to turn to when working on an assignment (1= no resources, 5 = lots of resources):

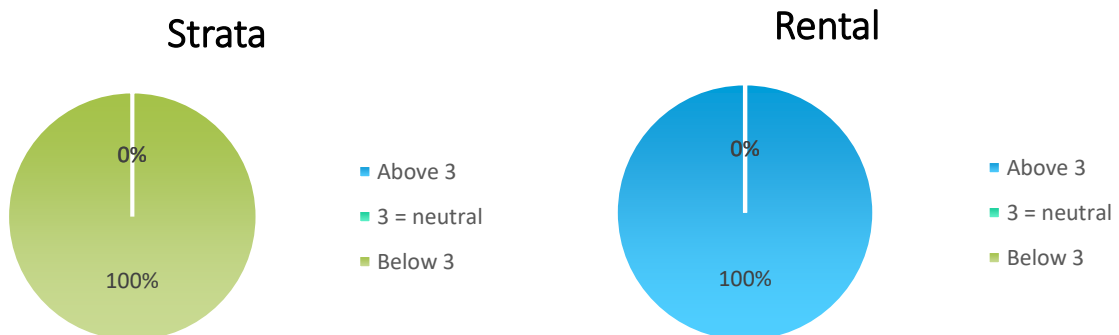


Figure 7: New Employee Survey Question #4

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Figure 8 displays the results of the fifth question of the survey. All the new employees from the strata and rental department find that the training program could be improved.

The current training program:

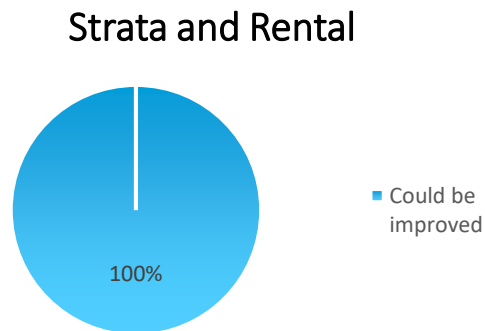


Figure 8: New Employee Survey Question #5

Figure 9 shows the results from the last question of the survey. The new employees from the strata department all wanted a specific mentor assigned to each new employee, whereas the new employees from the rental department wanted weekly meetings between departments instead.

If only one option can be implemented, which one should it be?

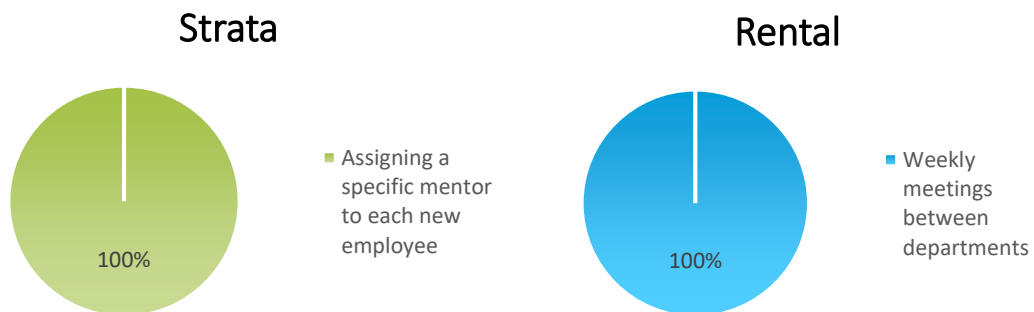


Figure 9: New Employee Survey Question #6

Results from the Interview with a Senior Staff

An interview was conducted with a senior staff who has been working at Siegle Properties for around ten years. Due to privacy issues, the identity of the senior staff will remain anonymous. Currently, she works with the strata department after spending three years in the rental department.

From her perspective, the arrival of new employees has impacted productivity levels. Not only has she been assigned to review the work done by the new employees, but her co-workers as well. She has disclosed that often assignments need to be re-done because the manager needed them done by the end of the day. Reviewing the work done by the new employees has caused her to stay overtime to finish her assigned work. Moreover, she has also been receiving numerous complaints from clients about not receiving assistance promptly. An example would be a client waiting for certain documents to continue with his claim for a leak in his unit. Due to a heavier workload, she did not have enough time to promptly follow up with his claim documents with the insurance and plumbing companies. She thinks that due to a shortage of staff, new employees are being sent to do work while still confused about certain work procedures.

There are training manuals for new employees to refer to in both the strata and rental department. She has used them before and mentioned that the training manual for the strata department is only sufficient for repetitive procedures such as charging strata fees. Since the procedure for various assignments is situation-dependent, the training manual would be massive to cover all possible situations. Compared to the training manual for the rental department, that training manual is comprehensive as the work being done in the rental department is simple and routine. She believes that is the reason why the new employees in the rental department are more

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independent, whereas the new employees in the strata department are more reliant on the senior staff.

When asked of her opinion of weekly department meetings, a weekly meeting between departments and assigning a specific mentor to each new employee, she said that they would definitely improve the productivity at the office. If a mentor was assigned to each of them, the new employees can take their time asking them questions instead of asking questions while working on their assignment. Moreover, she has indicated that meetings within and between departments would be useful because employees would be able to share information on clients and projects, so new employees can easily work in either department.

Results from the Interview with a New Employee (Strata Department)

An interview was conducted with a new employee who has been working at Siegle Properties for around three months. Due to privacy issues, the identity of this new employee will remain anonymous. The interview with him revealed that the work environment is very hectic. He disclosed that when he first arrived at the company, he was trained to do assignments from the rental department. Although the training was minimal, there was a training manual for him to reference whenever he needed assistance. After working with the rental department for a month, he was assigned to work with the strata department. However, he wishes to be moved back to the rental department. The strata department has a much heavier workload, and often times when he asks for assistance, he receives a vague answer or is told to look at the training manual. Although, the training manual is sometimes helpful, most of the time it is useless. The training manual has notes on repetitive procedures such as charging strata fees, but has no notes on how to assist clients when doing an insurance claim and other complicated issues. Hence when

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assisting clients, he is often confused and needs assistance since depending on certain situations, he cannot disclose certain information. He feels that he needs more training and has indicated that he would like to have a specific mentor to assist him. By doing so, he can get a better understanding of certain work procedures.

Results from the Interview with a Strata Manager

Due to privacy issues, the strata manager's identity will remain anonymous. The interview with him revealed that he has noticed an impact on the productivity levels at the office due to senior staff having to review the work of the new employees. Moreover, he has received many complaints from clients about not being assisted promptly. Currently, he is thinking of devising a solution to fix this problem and has thought of the idea to have a weekend training session for the new employees. A weekend training session will increase the communication between employees and they can learn from one another by sharing their own tips. He has discussed this solution with the rental manager, but they are uncertain whether this can fully resolve the current situation. He thinks that assigning a specific mentor to each new employee is a good idea, but has concerns whether the senior staff is willing to comply as they may consider this as extra work. Moreover, he agrees that increasing communication will increase productivity within the office as employees can share information on clients and tips for working on assignments. Hence, he agrees on having weekly department meetings and weekly meetings between departments.

Conclusion

Summary and Overall Interpretation of Findings

The responses from the senior staff, new employees and strata manager conclude that communication is an important factor towards increasing productivity at the office. The strata manager and the senior staff agree that the new employees are insufficiently trained and asking questions on the job does not allow them to get proper training. All parties agree on assigning a specific mentor for each new employee and that there should be weekly meetings either within each department or between departments.

Some key findings from the surveys and interviews would be the preference to work in the rental department over the strata department and the difference in needs between the two departments. The data collected from the surveys conclude that due to a comprehensive training manual, the new employees find the rental department to be more desirable to work in. Furthermore, the data shows that since the new employees in the rental department have adequate training, they would like to increase communication between the two departments whereas the new employees in the strata department would like a mentor instead.

Recommendations

Increasing communication at Siegle Properties can be done by assigning a specific mentor for each new employee and implementing weekly meetings between and within departments. To have the new employees be more comfortable when working on assignments, assigning a specific mentor is of utmost importance. A mentor can guide them on each step when working on an assignment and give them tips. Furthermore, implementing weekly meetings allow new employees a chance to share information on clients and projects that they have not interacted with and a chance to ask questions (Roach 43).

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Expected Outcome

By implementing the recommendations listed, there will be an increase in productivity. The new employees would be better trained with a mentor, hence able to produce assignments with fewer errors and will soon be able to work independently. Furthermore, weekly department meetings allow employees to share their concerns and progress on their work, hence they are able. Lastly, weekly meetings between departments can increase efficiency as information about clients and projects can be shared and discussed. Hence, employees from both departments will be able to assist clients from either department.

References

Clampitt, Phillip G., and Cal W. Downs. "Employee Perceptions of the Relationship Between Communication and Productivity: A Field Study." *The Journal of Business Communication* (1973), vol. 30, no. 1, Jan. 1993, pp. 5–28, *SAGE Journals*, doi:10.1177/002194369303000101. Accessed 10 December 2019.

Roach, Thomas J., PhD. "Communication and Productivity: Devoted to the Production and Sale of Rock and Clay Products." *Rock Products* 118.10 (2015): 43. *ProQuest*. Web. 10 Dec. 2019.

Appendix I: Interview Questions for a Senior Staff

Increasing Communication between Employees at Siegle Properties

My name is Amy Yung and I am an UBC undergraduate student engaged in a technical writing project. The purpose of this interview is to obtain data for a study investigating solutions to increase communication between employees at Siegle Properties. Data collected from this survey may be used in a formal report addressed to the directing manager at Siegle Properties. The formal report will give recommendations on increasing communication between employees that will lead to an increase in productivity at Siegle Properties.

This interview will take less than 25 minutes and your responses are voluntary and anonymous. If you have any comments or questions about this study, please feel free to contact me at ayung.024@gmail.com.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview.

Interview questions for a senior staff:

- What department are you from?
- How long have you been working here?
- Have you been assigned to review work done by new employees? If so, any comments or concerns?
- Have you received any complaints from clients on not being assisted in a timely manner?
- Have you received any complaints from managers due to handing in an assignment late?
- Do you think new employees are receiving adequate training?
- Should there be more communication between employees at the office? Why or why not?
- What do you think of weekly department meetings and weekly meeting between departments?
- What do you think of having a specific mentor assigned to each new employee?
- What do you think of the training manuals from each strata?

Appendix II: Interview Questions for a New Employee

Increasing Communication between Employees at Siegle Properties

My name is Amy Yung and I am an UBC undergraduate student engaged in a technical writing project. The purpose of this interview is to obtain data for a study investigating solutions to increase communication between employees at Siegle Properties. Data collected from this survey may be used in a formal report addressed to the directing manager at Siegle Properties. The formal report will give recommendations on increasing communication between employees that will lead to an increase in productivity at Siegle Properties.

This interview will take less than 25 minutes and your responses are voluntary and anonymous. If you have any comments or questions about this study, please feel free to contact me at ayung.024@gmail.com.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview.

Interview questions for a new employee:

- What department are you from?
- How long have you been working here?
- Did you receive any training prior to working here?
- What assignments do you usually work on? Do you feel confident when working on assignments?
- Do you think you are told adequate instructions when assigned work?
- Who do you turn to when you have questions on an assignment?
- Do you often have to figure things out by yourself? If so, how often does that happen?
- Have you ever had any trouble assisting a client? If so, how often does that happen?
- What do you think of having a specific mentor assigned to each new employee?

Appendix III: Interview Questions for a Strata Manager

Increasing Communication between Employees at Siegle Properties

My name is Amy Yung and I am an UBC undergraduate student engaged in a technical writing project. The purpose of this interview is to obtain data for a study investigating solutions to increase communication between employees at Siegle Properties. Data collected from this survey may be used in a formal report addressed to the directing manager at Siegle Properties. The formal report will give recommendations on increasing communication between employees that will lead to an increase in productivity at Siegle Properties.

This interview will take less than 25 minutes and your responses are voluntary and anonymous. If you have any comments or questions about this study, please feel free to contact me at ayung.024@gmail.com.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview.

Interview questions for a strata manager:

- Have you noticed a decrease in productivity at the office?
- Recently, there have been many complaints from clients about not being assisted in a timely manner. Have you been notified of this issue? Any comments and concerns?
- Do you think the employees have adequate communication with one another?
- Senior staff have been assigned to review work done by new employees. Do you think this a good solution for our current problem?
- What do you think of having a specific mentor assigned to each new employee?
- Do you think more communication within the office will increase productivity? Why or why not?
- What do you think of weekly department meetings and weekly meeting between departments?