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

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# **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 complemented for their efficiency when assisting owners and tenants. Recently, many complaints of not being assisted in a timely manner has been received. Not only are complaints being received from clients, but many strata council members has also filed complaints against Siegle Properties of not meeting deadlines when preparing files for them. As numerous complaints are being sent, Siegle Properties risks losing their management rights for currently managed strata plans.

## **Purpose of Study**

 One possible reason for the numerous complaints may be the issue of communication between employees. 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 do 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, senior staff are told to review the work done by new employees. By increasing communication between employees, employees can share tips with each other when working on assignments and can lessen the burden on senior staff as well.

## **Methods**

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

Surveys were sent to all the senior staff and new employees at Siegle Properties. Surveys sent to 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 a senior staff, a new employee and the strata manager. The interviews with the senior staff and new employee is 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 of the current situation at the office and to get his opinion on what is causing a decrease in productivity.

# **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, workload has been 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, 86% said the reason was because 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

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

occur:

Figure 2 shows the results for third and fourth question 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.

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

 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 not helpful because they were confused on 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 mostly 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

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

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

## 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 is:

Figure 8: New Employee Survey Question #5

Figure 9 shows the results from the last question of the survey. The new employees of the strata department all wanted a specific mentor assigned to each new employee. The new employees of 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 had worked 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, low productivity is caused by the arrival of new employees. Not only has she been assigned to review work done by the new employees, but also her co-workers. She has disclosed that often assignments need to be re-done because the manager needed them by the end of the day. Reviewing work done by the new employees has caused her to have insufficient time to finish her own assignments. Not only does she have to stay overtime, she has been receiving numerous complaints from clients about not receiving assistance in a timely manner. 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 work load, 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 shortage of staff, new employees are being sent to do work while not being trained properly.

When asked of her opinion of weekly department meetings, 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. Currently, communication is lacking between employees and hence, new employees are lost when doing assignments. If a mentor was assigned to them, they can help them learn faster instead of asking questions when confused. Moreover, she has indicated that meetings within and between departments would be useful because employees would be able to be caught up on clients from both departments, so new employees can easily work in either department.

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

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 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. Currently, he has been with the company for three months and indicated that 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 received a vague answer. Moreover, when assisting clients, he is often confused and does not know how to assist them because depending on certain situations, he cannot disclose certain information. He feels that he is not yet ready to assist clients right away 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 the Strata Manager**

Due to privacy issues, the strata manager’s identity will remain anonymous. The interview with him revealed that he has noticed a decrease in productivity due to senior staff having to review the work of new employees. Moreover, he has received many complaints from clients. 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 are 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 department or between departments.

One key finding from the surveys and interviews would be the rental department being preferred over the strata department. Many stated that they wished to be in the rental department and that there was a training manual that they could use. Moreover, the work done in the rental department seems to be more straightforward than the word done in the strata department as many has stated that the work is complex in the strata department.

## **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. In order 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 get information on clients and projects that they have not interacted with and a chance to ask questions.

## **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 allows employees to share their concerns and progress on their work, hence they are able. Moreover, 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**

# **Appendix I: Interview Questions for a Senior Staff**

# **Appendix II: Interview Questions for a New Employee**

# **Appendix III: Interview Questions for the Strata Manager**