Finding Your Voice

One of the buzzy business trends today revolves around “employee voice”—empowering workers to share their ideas and making sure they feel heard. “If you’re a leader and you’re not tapping into employee voice, you’re not tapping into employee potential,” says Peter Cardon, professor of clinical business communications at University of Southern California.

Effective workplace communications is important for this, but so are other steps. Richard Marshall, global managing director of Korn Ferry’s Corporate Communications practice, suggests:

1. **Face to face whenever possible.**
   Creates context, avoids misinterpretations, and builds more authentic relationships. In the electronic age, this can have a disproportionately positive impact.

2. **Townhalls.**
   Ideal for communicating big news as well as regular updates, helping employees feel more connected.

3. **Address the talker and listener.**
   Employees need clear guidelines on the types of feedback and ideas managers want, while bosses must demonstrate that the input is valuable.

4. **Open-door meetings with leaders.**
   If held regularly, keeps leaders in touch with the staff pulse, helps defuse issues before they balloon, and gives employees more access to the top.

5. **Employee networks and affinity groups.**
   Helps various populations share common experiences and be a collective voice to leadership on key issues.

6. **Making sure everyone has equal chance to voice ideas.**
   Avoids any person or gender speaking up more than others and fosters a culture of respect.