



Potential Solutions

Problematic Practice

Managers habitually talk in private and fail to share significant decisions and policies with staff, in particular with staff with different identities than themselves.

Sustainable Practice

The healthiest organizations have an internal culture of open communication, with abundant informal conversation among all staff and stakeholders, as well as meetings and written documentation. While too much internal focus can stress staff and drain time away from program work, reach for a balance.

Keeping information confidential should have a clear privacy rationale (e.g., the identity of anonymous donors, HR issues and individual net paycheck amounts). Staff should understand what management means by confidentiality and discretion.

Other than confidential items, transparency should be the norm.

After board meetings and major management meetings, non-personnel decisions should be shared with relevant staff in writing and verbally, along with any informational materials related to strategy options and organizational development.

Aspirational Practice

At bigger organizations, an internal e-newsletter or Slack channel could include regular management reports.

Some staff feel unclear on basic information about the organization and its policies.

The big picture of organizational strategies, values, goals and structure should be explained during onboarding new staff, updated and reviewed regularly and made easily accessible to all staff.

The personnel policy should be comprehensive and handy for staff to consult. The NOLO book "[Create Your Own Employee Handbook](#)" has templates.

Annual planning and progress reports should refer back to those big picture strategies, values and goals to refresh everyone's understanding and update as needed. Try using a [dashboard](#) to ensure good information flow across the organization.

With input from all stakeholders, create a people-centered [Employer Philosophy](#) that ties the qualities of the employer-employee relationship to the mission and values of the organization.

Continued on next page.



Problematic Practice

Pay-setting practices are kept secret because they involve unjustifiable criteria such as when someone was hired or contracted, sources of funding for jobs, nepotism, etc.

Potential Solutions

Sustainable Practice

Discuss openly the values behind your rationales for paying some staff more (e.g. seniority, responsibility, expertise, needs); explain the pay-setting policy in writing and abide by it.

Legally the organization's [990 tax form](#) must include the compensation of the five highest paid employees, if over \$100,000.

Aspirational Practice

A few nonprofits have decided that [individual gross pay amounts should be shared openly](#), after getting consent from the entire staff. At others, certain individuals decide to disclose, while others keep their pay private. Outside facilitation of follow-up discussions may be needed to air the resulting emotions (such as resentment, shame, guilt and anger), but some organizations have reported that the resulting culture of trust and openness is worth it.