Left out of the communication loop?

Admins need a lot of information to do their jobs right, and it can be frustrating when you don’t have all you need through no fault of your own. What to do when it’s the higher-ups keeping you in the dark?

That’s what one reader asked recently on the Admin Pro Forum:

“We work in an office where the communication is not good between the ministry staff and the support staff. The support staff are the last ones to know what is going on regarding new projects, changes, hitting deadlines, etc. We could use some suggestions on how to fix this.” — Lorene, office manager

Executive staff need to know exactly how their poor communication negatively affects the business, says Len Glick, professor at Northeastern University. To facilitate this, the admins should approach the higher-ups and provide a few examples where the business suffered because the support staff was uninformed or misinformed. Glick suggests that you also ask the executives what has prevented them from fully communicating in the past. “Their answers will point to different solutions,” he said. Their line of thinking may be that “we thought we were fully communicating or we didn’t think they needed to know that or we don’t have the time.” The answer they give will dictate how to fix the situation.

Zachary A. Schaefer, CEO of Mediation and Communication Solutions, also recommends having a face-to-face talk with the executives and framing your request for more frequent or clearer communication as a question rather than a demand or complaint. “This will lead to a dialogue and make the conversation feel less like office politics.”

Schaefer recommends providing at least two concrete examples of how broken-down communication has caused problems. He also suggests scheduling such a talk during a time when the executives can give you their full attention. Let them choose the time that’s best for them.