

Life is interdependent. Transition to Employee Ownership. Bring work to life.



Your weekly blog on all things EO
with Barry Horner

Episode 1 | Series 1

“Open Books, Open Minds.” Today, let’s start by tackling this big one:

In this first episode of EO Know-How, we are diving into a question I hear constantly asked.

How does information sharing actually work in an employee-owned business and how do you keep everyone informed about business performance and strategy?

What I will share is what I believe we have done successfully by way of information sharing in Paradigm Norton since we transitioned to EO in 2019.

For me, it’s not just about just imparting data, but rather it is about creating a transparent environment where employee-owners feel valued, informed and connected to the company’s mission, vision and strategic direction of the business.

Here are my **“5 Must-Do’s”** for information sharing in an EO business:

- 1. Be radically transparent.** Share the good, the not so good and the planned strategic direction of the business. Our Trust Board’s sign-off on the annual plan is a core part of this.
- 2. Be dependably consistent.** Regular updates keep everyone in the loop. Quarterly business updates work brilliantly for us.

3. **Be ruthlessly relevant.** Focus on information that directly impacts roles and performance. Informed team members are empowered team members.
4. **Be crystal clear in your communication.** Create spaces for questions and feedback and start a 'Partner Voice' forum.
5. **Be effortlessly accessible.** Make information easy to understand and available through various channels. Don't assume financial jargon is common knowledge – seek to explain it.

So, what are the best ways of sharing key information?

Now to our Playbook...

Here are seven ways that we share information at Paradigm Norton, that are all working really well for us at present.

1. **Firstly, the 'All hands Meetings':** These can be weekly, monthly, or quarterly and provide a platform for the leadership to share updates on performance, key projects and strategic initiatives. Historically we have shared information via our monthly Partner Huddle, but now under the leadership of our new CEO we will be holding quarterly Town Hall meetings.
2. **Next, we have Internal Updates:** We have a Partner newsletter which we call 'Partner Insights'. This covers all matters impacting the lives of our Partners, from training to employee benefits to areas that our charitable foundation has supported. On a weekly basis we also have 'PN Gems' which are 15 minute bitesize training sessions accessible to all Partners.
3. **Omnia – yes strange name I know:** We host an online intranet hub that houses important documents and financial reports, our annual strategic plan and firm-wide communication. We also always make 'Insights Live' available to watch back on catch up.
4. **Financial Updates:** We have always chosen to keep individual salary details confidential, but most other financial information and data gets shared and communicated. We share the overall financial health of Paradigm Norton, our revenue and profitability goals and key financial metrics, our current bank balance, all hopefully shared in a clear and understandable way.
5. **Strategy Briefings:** When the board makes significant strategic decisions and updates the annual strategic plan, summaries and explanations of the rationale behind them are communicated to all the team. We typically make a shorter three-page infographics summary available, but we have a more detailed and longer version also available for those that want to pour over the detail.

- 6. Partner Voice:** Many Employee-Owned businesses have elected employee representatives who sit on advisory boards or have regular meetings with the leadership team to voice employee perspectives and receive updates. These representatives then cascade information back to their colleagues. Launched in June 2025, this is still in its infancy but looks to already be a particularly helpful mechanism for feeding back important information to the key decision makers and Partners.
- 7. Finance for non-accountants:** We provide annual and ongoing training for all Partners on business performance and financial literacy.

Board and Executive Committee Decisions and Communication

Board & ExCo decisions are of course the responsibility of the Board of directors but clearly have a significant impact on all employee-owners.

At Paradigm Norton we have sought to create some best practice around how key decisions are effectively communicated.

I am pleased to share with you what is working well for us.

Historically, the **‘All hands quarterly Partner Huddle’** has been the forum for feeding back key Board decisions to the wider partner group. We walk the team through the Board agenda and the matters being discussed and the decisions reached.

We try and avoid overwhelming the team with detail and seek to provide the key and essential information and what is most likely to impact them.

Explaining the rationale and reasoning behind key board decisions helps team members understand the strategic thinking and how it aligns with the company’s goals and their interests as owners.

Clearly articulating how a board decision will impact them, their roles, or the company’s future is crucial for buy-in and understanding.

We have always sought to provide appropriate avenues for employees to ask questions and seek clarification about board decisions and this we have found fosters transparency and addresses their concerns.

This might be through the chat facility on online Partner Huddles, via the team appointed Trustees who regularly reach out to all team members or via the Partner Voice forum.

As a part of our 2023/24 governance review, we decided in an effort to facilitate great communication across the business and to establish proper accountability, that we would appoint the independent chair of the Trust Board to an observer role (not a Companies House Director) on the main Board. This is a new step for us, and I will let

you know how it is working in due course.

Finally, **Trustee Communication:** The Trustees appointed by the wider team, have a responsibility to understand key board decisions and communicate relevant information to the beneficiary team members. We see this as a key part of the role of being an EO Trustee and our team do this really well.

Just a few other things to watch out for, with an acronym of EOT, before I wrap up...

- **Essential Information Only:** Balancing transparency with the need to avoid overwhelming employees with excessive or confidential information is key.
- **Ongoing:** Deliver key and important information on a regular basis and try and build consistency in terms of what is delivered. This will drive engagement.
- **Tailoring Communication:** Different types of information may require different communication methods. You will find that some Partners want only the executive summary, whilst others want the fine detail. Seek to cater for all needs.

By implementing robust and transparent information-sharing practices, employee-owned businesses can cultivate a more engaged, informed and empowered workforce, which is fundamental to the success of the model.

I hope you have enjoyed the first episode in our EO Know-How series.

In next week's episode of EO Know-How, watch out for **'The Big Reveal'- When should you tell your team of the plan to transition to EO?**

For more information or to discuss anything in this latest Know-How;

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