



## County of Santa Clara Social Services Agency - The SSA Voice Videocast

**Overview:** The SSA Voice Videocast is an innovative and unique strategy to improve overall Employee Engagement for The County of Santa Clara Social Services Agency.

**Challenge:** The Santa Clara County Social Services Agency (SSA) provides an innovative and unique bi-weekly videocast as a strategy to improve overall Employee Engagement for its staff of nearly 2700 employees through more frequent and improved communication from SSA and county leadership. Over the last 3 calendar years, SSA has collected and utilized data via its Annual Employee Engagement & Well-being Survey to obtain feedback and explore the unique challenges that impact the overall engagement and well-being of their staff. Areas consistently identified in the survey as needing growth and improvement are communication from leadership and recognition of staff.

**Solution:** In late 2019, SSA committed to developing data-driven strategies intended to improve overall employee engagement through the dedication of staff positions and resources to create a framework focused on employee engagement & well-being. In early 2020, as work continued on developing a framework and testing out various strategies, the COVID pandemic struck putting an immediate halt on the work. As the County, State, Country, and World were trying to grapple with the enormity of the pandemic and how it impacted everyone at every level of their lives, a work group comprised of staff from across the agency came together to try and create strategies to attend to the wellness of the SSA Staff during this time of uncertainty. Much like our staff, this group quickly identified that news and information from local, to state, federal and world news was often unclear, sometimes conflicting, lacked certainty and created a great deal of anxiety and fear for everyone. In addition, many folks were experiencing isolation and disconnection from others. This group pondered on how could SSA create a communication platform for SSA Staff and their Executive Leadership Team to share their questions, fears and worries about the pandemic as well as, provide information on how the local practices and policies also impact them as employees of SSA.

**Innovation:** Building on previous work SSA did to provide a Virtual Webinar where SSA Executives provided updates to all staff and also answered pre-submitted questions from staff, The SSA Voice Videocast was created. The intent of this strategy was not only to improve communication between staff at all levels of the agency, but it was also intended to be used to highlight and recognize great

work of staff, provide up-to-date information about all things happening in and around SSA, as well as improve relationships and create a sense of community amongst all SSA Staff that transcended classifications and departments. The SSA Voice videocast became and is a 90-minute bi-weekly virtual webinar that focuses on engagement of all of SSA Staff and features the following segments and engagement strategies:

- Interactive Mentimeter & Polling questions to engage and explore what's on the minds of our staff and audience
- Announcements that are presented by volunteer staff and that are focused on what is happening in and around SSA.
- A recognition segment (Virtual Hi-5's) where staff can submit names and examples of great work done by colleagues.
- A Special Guest interview segment that has included County Executives, SSA Executive Leaders, Panel discussions with SSA Staff as well as leaders of various departmental programs.
- A regular interview segment with SSA Director Bob Menicocci where he answers questions submitted by staff.

**Results:** Responses to the SSA Voice have been enthusiastic. The 29 videocasts average between 275 and 325 live attendees and approximately 220 views of the recorded livestream later. Employee participation comes from all agency departments and across all work classifications. Survey responses sent post-show suggest that audiences are satisfied with the videocast (e.g., 93% agree that they would recommend The SSA Voice to others) and feel more connected to agency leadership (e.g., 95% agree that The SSA Voice is an effective venue to communicate relevant information to staff). More impressively, SSA's annual engagement and well-being survey showed an uptick in communication and recognition, two areas in which the agency was pleased to see improve by over 10 percentage points.

**Replicability:** Through the use of virtual applications such as Zoom and MS Teams, a videocast program such as "The SSA Voice" can be replicated to support other Agencies/Departments and Programs. This is evidenced by "The Meeting at the Bridge" which staff from the Santa Clara County Learning Organization adopted many of the ideas and cues from The SSA Voice to create their own Webinar/Videocast to support communication between the County Executive's Office and the County of Santa Clara employees.

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**Additional Materials:** Links to 3 Installments: [The SSA Voice 11/6/20](#) [The SSA Voice 6/16/21](#) [The SSA Voice 7/16/21](#)