BPI group

Words Matter
A Leader's Guide to Communicating Change

Businesses are grappling with new challenges daily as we all assess the impact of our rapidly changing environment and the unknowns of the future. If you are contemplating difficult decisions such as furloughs or reductions in force, we've created this checklist to help you plan and execute a solid communications strategy for what lies ahead. Access the full guide at **www.bpi-group.us**.

Before Communication:

Follow these steps to lay the groundwork for an effective communication campaign:

☐ **Identify Messaging Goals**

Set clear, measurable goals to determine whether change communications are effective.

☐ **Craft Clear & Concise Messaging**

Communications should have a clear message with no room for misinterpretation.

☐ **Understand the Impact**

Identify the impact to the individual and the team for each change communication.

☐ **Prepare to Support Emotions**

Prepare to hold space for a range of emotions but don't feel like you need to fix everything.

☐ **Display the Right Leader Behaviors**

Lead by example and display the same behaviors you expect from your team.

☐ **Consider Your Stakeholders**

In a restructuring scenario, stakeholders include exiting employees, remaining employees, and people leaders. Establish communication protocols for each group.

☐ **Coordinate Message Dissemination**

Deliver information to the appropriate stakeholder groups in a sequential manner, prioritizing groups who are most negatively impacted.

☐ **Prepare to Answer Questions**

Know your talking points and prepare responses in advance, even if the response is, "I don't know but we will figure it out together."

☐ **Establish Communication Protocols**

Outline roles, responsibilities, and procedures by answering key questions: Who will share what information with which stakeholders? How will these communications take place? What is the process for escalating change-related issues?

What to Communicate:

Develop a communication plan for each of your employee stakeholder groups:

Transitioning Employees

☐ **Information**

Provide detailed information on the changes, including timelines, expectations, and any other relevant information.

☐ **Explanation**

Share an honest explanation and emphasize that the decision was not based on job performance but rather due to economic or internal factors.

☐ **Resources**

Share any available resources the organization is offering to transitioning employees (e.g. outplacement services, job search resources, etc.)

☐ **Support**

Communicate the organization's ongoing support to the individual but avoid making promises in regards to rehiring, job placement, etc.

Remaining Employees

☐ **Information**

Share what's changing, why, and how. Strive for transparency, address any workforce changes head-on, and emphasize the need for unity.

☐ **Inclusion**

Garner buy-in on the new vision and enlist employees' support in shaping the future of the organization.

☐ **Support**

Let employees know where the organization is in the change process by regularly communicating milestones.

☐ **Safety/Security**

Clearly communicate what is not changing to provide reassurance that there are anchors.

☐ **Permission**

Set the tone for employees to take risks without fear of failure in the new period of change.

☐ **Reinforcement**

Reinforce desired behaviors by recognizing individuals exhibiting these behaviors in the organization.

When to Communicate:

☐ **Establish a Timely & Consistent Rhythm**

Share timely and accurate information that answers critical questions. This will help to facilitate change acceptance.

☐ **Frequency is Key**

Share when you have concrete updates (whether good or bad) on the current state and future direction.

☐ **Be Mindful of Global Teams**

Schedule live updates, such as virtual town halls or video streams, during times that work best for all employees.

How to Communicate:

☐ **Use Multiple Channels**

Select a variety of channels, such as email, town-hall calls, video meetings, voicemails, etc., to ensure your message reaches all employees.

☐ **Choose the Right Medium**

Work with internal leaders to outline how different types of communication will be disseminated to the organization.

☐ **Confirm Message Receipt/Comprehension**

Always solicit confirmation from team members that they are aware of and understand the changes communicated to them.

Moving Forward:

☐ **Engage Outgoing Employees**

Early and sustained engagement with outgoing employees will help foster an easier transition.

☐ **Continue to Improve Communication**

Solicit feedback, escalate questions you can't answer, and share insights with leadership to create a feedback loop.

☐ **Incorporate Change Into Discussions**

Add organizational change as a regular agenda item, discuss progress toward initiatives, provide space to problem solve about what is going well or where team members need support.

☐ **Be Available to Your Team**

Overcome social distancing challenges by hosting virtual team lunches, scheduling casual calls with team members, asking about weekend plans or whatever comes up. Get creative!

☐ **Don't Shy Away From Growing Pains**

Make it a point to continue asking how team members are navigating changes.

We're Here to Help

For more information on employee transition and change management, contact us at ereynolds@bpi-group.us.