

**Title:**

Communication Smoothes the Path of Change

**Word Count:**

482

**Summary:**

Effective communication is always important to business success. In times of change it is vital.

**Keywords:**

communication, change, management

**Article Body:**

Productivity almost always suffers in times of great change, because employee stress dramatically increases due to the universal fear of the unknown. In these times, communication becomes more important than ever.

Often senior executives genuinely believe they are communicating with employees when it comes to matters that affect them. Unfortunately, they often underestimate the number of matters that includes, for the fact is that most high level decisions will affect employees in one way or another. (That's why a new law recently went into effect in Britain forcing employers to answer employees' questions on any changes or decisions that affect them.)

So how do you know what is important to employees and what to tell them? Well, you need to put yourself in the position, the mind, the heart of employees—one employee at a time. If you were that person, what would you be worried about right now in the current situation? What would be important for you to know? What is the worst thing that could happen, and would you want to know about it in advance? How would you want to be told?

Of course, you can't answer those questions yourself. You need input from the very people you are trying to understand. Depending on how much you can discuss or how much is already known, you might ask a few individuals what the grapevine is saying, and what people are worrying and wondering about.

Now, armed with this information, draft the answers to the questions. Of course they must be truthful answers, for insincerity is easily recognized and will deal a death blow to your communication efforts. Then they must be couched in

terms that are clear and uncompromising, but also considerate and compassionate. It's worth spending some time on this part—lack of commitment to your message is also easily read and will automatically raise the cynicism level among employees.

Next comes dissemination of the information. There is, as we all know, no shortage of communication technology in the business world. However, the way a person receives news can dramatically affect how he or she feels about it, so you need to choose the medium very carefully. E-mail can be perceived as cold and unfeeling in many cases, although it is useful for routine updates that don't have emotional overtones. Some messages are better spoken, either by managers to their groups or by the CEO to the whole organization.

If the messengers don't have highly developed communication skills, it's worth engaging the services of professional speech writers or presentation coaches to help them, but be sure the message remains honest, clear and compassionate.

And above all, follow through on your commitments and promises. Nothing turns employees off more than empty words, but sincere, caring, ongoing communication can form the basis for building employee engagement when the present time of turmoil ends.