

# Communicating During Change

## A Guide for Leaders

### Leading through Communication

Employees' two biggest complaints when experiencing organizational change are:

1. "I wasn't communicated with enough," and
2. "My organization doesn't care about me."

To add to the challenge of communicating during change, research shows it takes at least SIX times for a message to start being heard, taken seriously, and processed.

#### Tips for Communicating Organizational Change:

- Repeat the message (at least) six times
- Vary the medium – after the first one-on-one conversation try in-person meetings, phone calls, emails, etc.
- Ensure two-way communication – Allow time for questions and feedback
- Consider timing
- Ensure consistency – keep your message consistent or explain why the plan has evolved, as appropriate
- Realize people trust behavior over words
- Understanding is more important than agreement – they don't have to agree with the changes, but it is critical they understand what is and isn't changing.
- Tell them the truth- good news and bad
- Recognize people usually complain before they create. That's okay! If they seem apprehensive or upset, it is a sign they are beginning to process the change

Communicating a change is more than information sharing. Each employee will have their own unique reaction as they begin to manage their transition to the change.

As you prepare your communication, plan think of three Cs:

- make a **connection**,
- show **concern**, and most importantly,
- build **commitment** to the change.

In preparing communication for your team, answer the 4-P questions below. This will help you craft your communication in a way to **move your team from complying with the change to being committed to the change**.

Continually re-visit this plan and answer the questions in different ways, using different communication channels. While every question may not be applicable to your specific change, it can be useful to think through each “P” to ensure you build an effective communication plan.

---

## **4 P- Related Questions**

## **Messages to Communicate**

---

### **Purpose**

- Why are we doing this?
- What is the problem we are solving?
- What would happen if the organization didn't change?
- How will team members benefit from the change?

### **Picture**

- What will the other side of the change look like? (both tangibly and intangibly)
- How will the organization become more effective as a result of the change?
- What is changing and what is not?

### **Plan**

- What is the plan for getting where we need to go?
- What is going to happen over the next X months?
- What happens first, second, and third?

### **Part**

- What is my role?
- How will I be impacted?
- What role can I/the team play in making the change successful?
- What kind of support and training will be provided?

---

\* Source: Adapted from William Bridges and Linkage, 1998 & 2005