

Communication during times of Uncertainty

Communication during times of uncertainty often applies to our current circumstances, and could be a foundational factor for organizational survival. Overnight, all organizations are being forced to refine the way they do business, and we have had to quickly re-engineer our budgets, cashflow, and ultimately rethink our business models. We can learn from these difficult times and bounce back stronger than before.

This is a significant moment that will define the culture of our businesses for years to come. The security of routines has disappeared, and coupled with the loss of personal productivity, has created a high level of uncertainty. During these times of significant change, leadership must own the responsibility to consciously monitor and preserve the ongoing relationships and engagement of employees.

Leadership must blend the short-term demands imposed on the organization with the long-term relationship and engagement of their employees. Whether it is employees that have been furloughed or those that are asked to work through these difficult times, the organization must clarify a vision, and communicate, communicate, communicate.



As the organization decides which employees are needed to work through the crisis and which need to be temporarily furloughed, do not underestimate the anxiety level of each group. Can leadership expect their furloughed employees to patiently wait and return to their previous employment?

The inevitable nature of a furlough is a separation from significant social workplace connections and the comfort of daily routines and responsibilities. Without ongoing communication during times of uncertainty, it is an invitation for this valuable and experienced workforce to disconnect, lose interest, or start their own search for new opportunities.

Employees that remain are asked to work harder, and operate without the comfort of their normal routines and a stable workplace community. Existing employee's concern for their future may be somewhat less obvious than furloughed employees, however the unknowns associated with furloughs, lay-offs, or pay cuts, create fear and anxiety that must be clearly addressed by leadership on a timely basis.

Granted, leadership did not voluntarily choose to revamp their organization, but they are being forced to face a new reality. Organizations cannot always see the future, but with good counsel from consultants, they must paint a vision for the future and redefine their business model to attack the new norm.

Communication during times of uncertainty requires an organization to have a vision and a revised business model that includes specific messaging for all stakeholders, but most importantly for its employees. The simple act of communicating organizational intentions on a regular basis provides a substantial defense over the anxiety created by silence.

Leaders, HR and business consultants, understand the value of employee engagement and how it has been disrupted by the uncertainty of our current environment. With a consultant's support, leadership has an opportunity to impact and define their organizational culture for years to come.

Assessments or surveys that capture the interpersonal skills of employees and supervisors are a fundamental resource to measure the employee experience and their impact on organizational performance.