

Communicating Change - Supervisor Roundtable Monday, October 10, 2016

The differences between failed and successful change initiatives are subtle, yet powerful

Failed Attempts	Successful Attempts
Employees perceive that change is "done to them"	Employees perceive they are given a voice to influence change
Communication occurs too late and is in response to damage already done	Communication is planned strategically and begins early in the change process
Communication focuses on justification of what employees are giving up	Communication focuses on what employees will gain and how it will be achieved
Eventually, employees will be told what changes they will have to make	Employees are educated on the business reasons for changes being made

Figure 1. Successful attempts at communicating change are proactive in nature and focus on positive benefits to employees.
From the book: *Innovations in Office Design: The Critical Influence Approach to Effective Work Environments*

A comprehensive communications plan includes "Who, Why, What, When and How"

	Actions	Other Considerations
Who?	<i>Set up change management team</i>	Identify external resources for communication content development, executive steering committee, and change management team
Why?	<i>Agree on purpose of the change management process</i>	Create and agree on a limited number of specific goals and outcomes for the workplace change management process
What?	<i>Know your audience</i>	Identify internal groups and employees affected by the change
	<i>Take "pulse of the organization" and create key messages</i>	Conduct a survey to understand current workspace needs, employee change readiness and communication preferences Message should include introduction to workplace strategy, business rationale and benefits to employees
When?	<i>Identify the time frame for communication process</i>	Create a communication process timeline with estimated start and end dates
How?	<i>Select communication methods</i>	Offer a mix of experiential and written or online communications
		For best results, have change management project sponsorship come from the most senior executive possible Create specific, measurable goals related to employee satisfaction with the move experience and the workspace Be aware that over the course of the change management process, individuals or groups may be added or deleted from your communication due to shifts in project scope The survey should include all affected employees. Keep the message short—create 3 to 5 bullet points for the business rationale, and for benefits to employees Use the bullet points as the foundation for all future messaging With a large change involving thousands of employees, the change management process can start 18 months before the move For most projects, you should get started 12 months prior to planned move date Communication methods can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Regular email blasts with project updates · Visits to the new space as it's built-out · Lunch and learns · Town hall meetings

Figure 2. Including these basic elements of communication will help employees "connect the dots" between the business rationale for the change and the new workplace strategy

Developing an exemplary communication plan does not have to be a daunting endeavor.

- 4 *Your initial task is to create a messaging framework for the workplace change process.* By keeping in mind the basics—who, why, what, when, and how—you'll be sure to address these essential elements of communication.
- 4 *Don't assume that the audience will automatically "connect the dots."* Ensure that message content clearly explains how shifts in the work environment align with other organizational changes or goals.
- 4 *Think of the communication plan as a living document.* As changes occur in the workplace transformation process, adaptations can be made to reflect important updates, articulate delays, or shift responsibilities as necessary. Because many aspects of resistance to change are unpredictable, this living document provides a flexible template to modify the messaging on an ongoing basis.

Source: Knoll, *Communicating Workplace Change*

Change Communication Checklist

10-Question Checklist on Change Management Communication - Are you:

1. Using the preferred senders to deliver communications in your organization?	<p>Benchmarking research shows that employees prefer to hear messages from two people in the organization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sponsor of the change (person at the top of the change) about the business issues and reasons for change • Their immediate supervisors about the personal impact of the change
2. Answering the questions, "Why is this change happening?" and "What is the risk of not changing?"	<p>When individuals learn of a change, their first question is, "Why is this happening." Senior leaders tend to focus on the vision of the future state, and project teams tend to focus on sharing their great new idea. However, the first communications about a change should focus on why the change is happening. And don't forget to continue and reinforce the 'why' throughout the entire project, especially if time elapses between your first communication and the start of implementation.</p>
3. Answering the question, "What's in it for me (WIIFM)?"	<p>Making a change is a personal choice, no matter what senior leaders believe. Communications about change must resonate. To be effective, communications must get at what an employee cares about and values. To gain their support, you must provide a compelling case for how they will be better off or what they get out of engaging in the change. Answer WIIFM (what's in it for me?) early and often in your communications.</p>
4. Resisting the urge to communicate through the project team?	<p>Employees prefer to hear messages from two people in the organization, and neither is the project leader. One of the biggest and most common mistakes you can make is to have a project team sending all of the communications.</p>
5. Using face-to-face communication?	<p>Face-to-face communication was identified as the most effective form of communication. While it is more time intensive, do not underestimate the value that face-to-face communication creates.</p>
6. Repeating key messages five to seven times?	<p>It is important to repeat key messages a number of times. The first time you announce a change to employees, they are often wondering how it will impact them and not focusing on the details of what you are communicating about. Repeating key messages ensures that what you want to get across is heard by employees. Share messages more often than you think you need to.</p>
7. Creating opportunities for two-way communication?	<p>You need to craft and plan for two-way communication. Give employees the opportunity to share their concerns, provide their feedback and ask questions. Two-way communications create buy-in and provide answers in real-time.</p>
8. Preparing the communicators to deliver effective communications and have the necessary conversations?	<p>One of your key roles will be to prepare the preferred senders (such as managers and supervisors) of change messages. This includes sharing with them the important messages that need to be delivered, creating alignment between different senders, and planning the delivery sequence. It also includes educating them on how to deliver key messages.</p>
9. Finding effective ways to reach your audience?	<p>A holistic communication plan uses numerous channels to reach employees. This could include meetings, one-on-one conversations, newsletters, presentations, brainstorming workshops, lunch and learns, Intranet Q&A forums, CDs, screen saver messages, etc. Be creative in how you communicate and gather feedback from employees.</p>
10. Using assessment tools to evaluate the effectiveness of communication messages?	<p>Communications cannot be viewed as an activity that is planned, delivered and then checked off the list of work to be done. You must find ways to ensure that employees are hearing and interpreting the messages you are trying to send. Assessment tools will help you identify when you haven't communicated effectively, or when the message is being misinterpreted, so you can continue to correct and refine your communications.</p>