

# 8 methods and techniques for communicating change:

## 1. Be clear and honest when communicating change to employees

Any sort of spin, sugarcoating or jargon will look like an effort to hide something. You'll gain employees' trust if you use simple, straightforward language, and are completely upfront about what's changing and why. Don't talk down to employees — this only makes them feel resentful and unvalued. Some companies make the mistake of believing their employees "can't handle the truth," but people respond well to respectful and honest communication. [Employees at merged companies understand why changes are being made less than those at non-merged companies.](#) In the shuffle, it's too easy to forget that employees need the basics: what and why.

**[Read More: Transparency with Employees: How Openness Plays a Key Role in a Positive Employee Experience](#)**

## 2. Use care when communicating organizational change

It's not just public events that create unease: HR changes often strike a personal chord with employees. Suddenly the company is monkeying with their healthcare, and maybe that affects their sick child. Or a company might be implementing an outcomes-based wellness program, forcing employees to make lifestyle changes rather than inspiring them to focus on what matters most to them. Take these concerns into consideration when deciding how to communicate change in the workplace — and outright acknowledge them too. Sometimes people just need to feel heard — in times when trust is damaged, empathy and understanding are the first steps to rebuilding.

## **Read More: New Limeade Research Reveals “Communicating with Care” is Critical for Organizations**

### **3. Tell employees what’s in it for them**

It’s the age-old marketing credo: What’s in it for me? We’re all looking out for #1, so hyping “good corporate citizenship” as a reason for change is a waste of time. Explain the benefits of the change and what employees can expect. Yes, things will be different. Acknowledge that. Yes, everyone may not like what’s changing. Acknowledge that too. But there’s generally an upside, so outline that as well.

If there’s no upside, then say so. Admit that what’s happening ... well, sucks, and talk about what you’ll do to make the change as smooth as possible. Then thank employees for their patience, cooperation and for sticking with you through the shift.

### **4. Set expectations with change management communication**

Employees feel reassured and are quicker to get on board when you paint a clear picture of exactly what’s going to happen and when. If you have to use a step-by-step list, do it. If your employees respond well to graphics, use them. Just make sure to set expectations by explaining the process so people can clearly see the road ahead.

### **5. Tell employees what they need to do**

The term “call to action” gets tossed around so much for good reason. It’s critical to outlining what needs to be done and when. This is what people are looking for at the end of a communication, so use bulleted lists, bold font, links to websites, etc. to highlight the necessary action. Even if there isn’t an essential next step for your employees, create one. Make sure everyone feels involved and they’ll join you through the change or transition.

## 6. Cascade leadership messages on change

Change communications are generally best delivered from the top. Develop a cascading messaging strategy that starts with your CEO or a senior VP, and then encourage directors and managers to discuss the change in more detail with their teams. Make sure to use a variety of media: email, all-hands meetings, company communications apps, home mailings (especially if family members are affected) and an FAQ for nitty-gritty details. And also remember to engage in direct conversations — create opportunities for employees to privately deliver messages or ask questions. Make it a topic in manager one-on-ones. Just make sure people feel like they can ask tough, personal questions.

## 7. Target your change management communication

Give careful thought to whether specific audiences are more affected by the change. For example, with healthcare changes, you may want to develop communications specific to families or those with chronic conditions. When change is isolated within a department or facility, communicate it widely, but show employees closer to the change that you're invested in their employee experience. This kind of targeting ensures you're not overwhelming the entire organization with support only a select group truly needs.

## 8. Create two-way strategies for communicating change

Remember what we said above — about employees needing to feel heard? Create two-way communication channels where they can ask questions, express their concerns and get answers. A dedicated email alias is a great start, but a town hall (or series) goes one step further. It's more personal and — if it you execute it right — feels like “we're all in this together.” Allow employees to ask questions and address all of them *clearly* and *honestly*. If you take away nothing else from this post, remember those two words for how to communicate change in the workplace.

Speaking clearly and honestly is key to communicating with employees at any time, but especially during uncertain — and sometimes unsettling — times of change.