

Teaching Line Managers to Be Good Communicators During Times of Change

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When organizations are going through change, be it major or minor, the most trusted source of communication for employees is nearly always their line manager. Equipping line managers to communicate well is essential, but it also has inherent challenges, including:

- Keeping messages consistent when you are relying on tens, hundreds or thousands of managers.
- Ensuring managers not only stay on message but also convey the right tone.
- Giving line managers the confidence to communicate in situations where they will not have all the answers.
- Ensuring that managers can communicate in a way that supports the organization, even when they might be dealing with their own emotional reactions to the changes.

How organizations decide to communicate about change depends on their structure, size, and culture and also on the nature of the change. Regardless of the situation, line managers will always be part of the communication process, not least because they are the ones who will have to deal with the day-to-day questions about what the changes mean for employees.

Methods and content

There are various ways of teaching line managers to be good communicators during times of change, but the process is much easier if the organization has a history of focusing on line manager communication and helping line managers build good relationships with their teams. Having a foundation of strong relationships facilitates the task of communicating and implementing change.

Some of the most frequently used methods for supporting managers during change are:

- Workshops
- Briefing meetings
- Written guidelines

Workshops have the advantage of allowing time to discuss the nature of the change, how employees are likely to react, etc. The manager can work with colleagues to think about what and how to communicate. Workshops also allow managers to reflect on how they themselves feel about the changes. Directly or indirectly, managers will be affected by the changes, too, and those who can build up their resilience will be the most effective leaders.

There is no one answer to the question of what change communication skills managers will

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