

Communicating change

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How to communicate change effectively



Planning

When you are communicating change, it is important to plan ahead.

Instead of having private, top-level discussions, involve people at all levels of the business.

This will create a sense of trust, and allow you to gain support from people from across the business.

Timing

Timing is everything when communicating changes. Don't wait until the last minute. Change takes time, and people are less likely to be open to it if they're left in the dark.

Focus on the people

Change affects people at all levels of the business. It can lead to feelings of stress and uncertainty, particularly if you're unsure about how it might affect you.

Be understanding about the feelings that might emerge. Provide information and reassurance where possible, and be honest with your team.

Find a purpose

Find a purpose for the change. Change is unsettling, and people are less likely to be open to it if they can't see a good reason for it happening.

Help your employees see why this change is good for them. How would they benefit?

Cater to your audience

Depending on roles and responsibilities, change will affect people differently. It is important to adapt your messaging depending on your audience.

Having a standard approach to all messaging is likely to lead to disengagement, as people will struggle to identify with it.

Effective messaging

When communicating change, try to use different methods. Initial communications may be done in person so people can express any concerns.

Following initial communication, you may then send out weekly email updates, or have monthly major update meetings.

Listen to people

It is important that people are given the space to express their concerns and provide feedback on the changes happening. Being open to feedback will create a sense of trust and collaboration.

How can you create a better communication plan?

What is it you want to communicate?

What is the best way to communicate the information?

How will you keep lines of communication open?

What is it you want to communicate?

You need to make sure that you clearly communicate the changes that are happening. This will make sure everyone understands what is happening and prevents confusion.

- What is driving the change right now?
- What are the benefits?
- What are the consequences of the change not happening?
- How will things look as a result of the change?
- Are there any challenges that need to be overcome?
- How will the change impact you?

What is the best way to communicate this information?

When you are communicating change, it is important to cater your method of communication to your audience.

Depending on who you are communicating the change to, you might change your approach and focus on information that is relevant to that audience.

How will you keep lines of communication open?

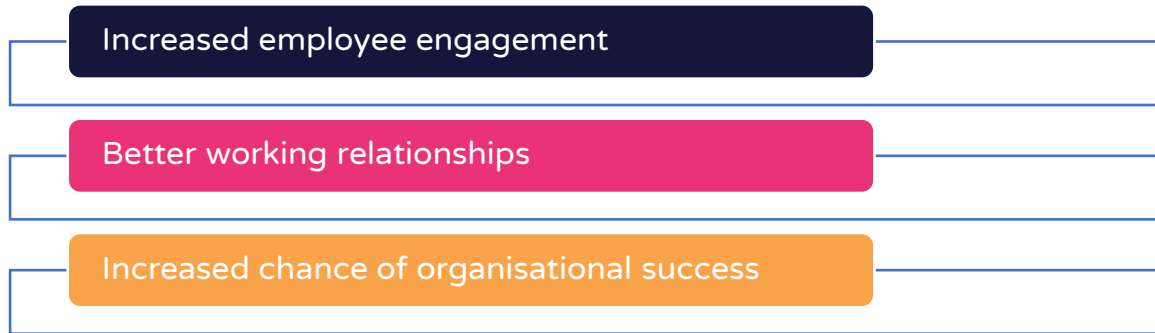
It is important that employees can talk about their feelings about the change.

Being open to feedback is important and fosters a sense of trust. It also allows you to make changes driven by feedback and collaborating with the people the change will affect.

Why do you need to get employees on board?

Getting employees on board with change is important to ensure continued success of the organisation.

Even if they may not fully agree with the change, it is important to foster a sense of acceptance and understanding that change is necessary.



Increased employee engagement

Communicating with employees and getting their acceptance is important to ensure productivity is maintained and employees remain engaged.

Better working relationships

When employees are on board with change, they are more likely to feel involved and trust the process.

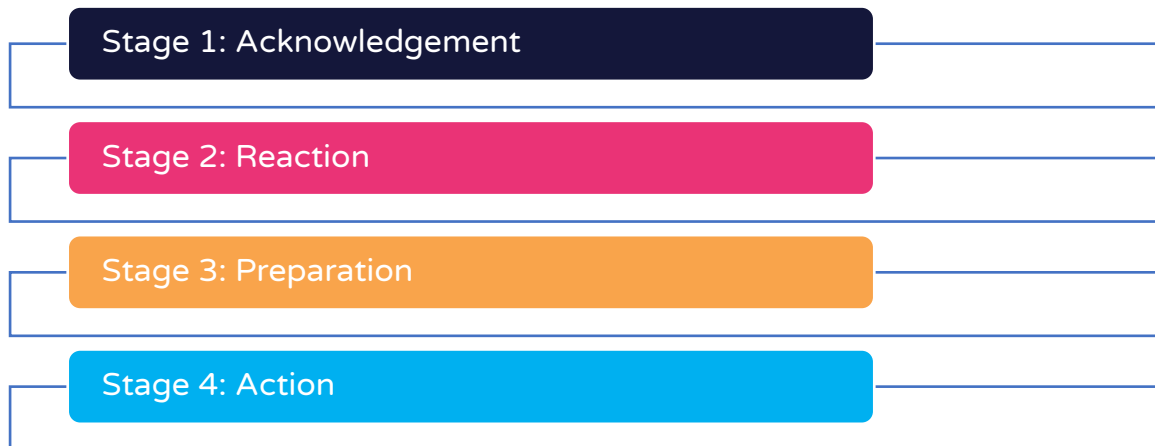
When this happens, you are likely to have stronger working relationships.

Increased chance of organisational success

The feelings that employees have about the change can have a direct impact on whether it is successful.

When employees feel positively and accept the change, they will likely be more proactive in implementing it. This will increase the chances of success.

What are the stages of change?



Stage 1: Acknowledgement

The first stage of change involves employees becoming aware that a change is occurring, and acknowledging that this is happening.

This can lead to them feeling a mix of emotions. Managers should provide a space for employees to ask questions and discuss their concerns.

Stage 2: Reaction

Employees will then begin to process their emotions regarding the change and discuss this with peers.

Being honest and open about the changes happening will prevent inaccurate assumptions being made. Help them to rationalise if the idea of change is causing them personal stress for any reason, e.g., concerns about job security.

Stage 3: Preparation

Once employees have worked through their initial emotions, they will then seek out further information about the situation to ensure they understand it fully.

It is important to involve employees in the change making process, giving them opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback.

Stage 4: Action

Finally, employees will begin to take steps towards actioning the changes that have been made, and incorporating it into their daily reality.

Manager should help employees build the necessary skills and have the right resources to implement the change.

How can you get employees on board?

Communication

- Clearly communicate why the change is occurring.
- Explain the decision making process that has led to this change.

Acknowledge resistance to change

- Don't assume that everyone will be on board with the change.
- Acknowledge all feelings, and respond to them with understanding and empathy.

Honesty

- Be honest about the changes.
- Don't keep things from employees, as this can create feelings of distrust.
- Provide a safe space for employees to discuss their thoughts.

Break it down

- Break down the changes happening into small, manageable chunks so it doesn't feel overwhelming for employees.

Ask for feedback

- Ask for feedback from your employees.
- These are the people who will be implementing the change, and will have a better understanding of what might work.
- Giving employees some ownership and responsibility in the process is also likely to lead to them being on board with the change.

Listen to your employees

- Listen to what employees have to say and provide them with opportunities to voice their thoughts.
- It is important to validate their feelings and understand how the change may affect them.