COMMUNICATION, FOR A CHANGE

How to communicate with employees when your organization is changing

Blythe Campbell

2018 Alaska State HR Conference
What causes organizational change?
How leaders see and manage change
How employees see and manage change
Why context is key
What HR professionals can bring to the table
What causes change?

Change in the “COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT”
that results in a change in STRATEGY
What causes change?

that results in...

LAYOFFS
RESTRUCTURING
PROCESS RE-ENGINEERING
MERGERS
ACQUISITIONS
MARKET EXPANSION OR CONTRACTION
PAY & BENEFITS CHANGES
CHANGES IN SENIOR LEADERSHIP
BANKRUPTCY/CLOSURE
How leaders see and manage change
How leaders see change

They have access to all the information

They see their competitive position in a holistic way

They consider a wide network of relationships

They connect the dots of opportunity

They think of change in terms of strategy, structure, and resources
How leaders manage change: the bad stuff

- Defer decisions
- Get impatient with pace of change
- Go straight to implementation
- Underestimate the role of culture
- Minimize input
How leaders manage change: the good stuff

Build a strong team
Articulate a compelling vision
Balance short- and long-term goals
Take risks
Make decisions
Model the right behaviors
Care about how people are treated
How employees see change – the bad words

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How employees see change – the good words

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What employees want to know
Will I still have a job? If I still have a job, will I have to do more? Will I have to move? Will my pay and benefits be impacted? Who will I work for? If I lose my job, what’s the timing? Will I get any help finding a new job? Is every department taking cuts? Is upper management taking cuts? Is the company going under? Is this really going to make our company better? When will you have the answers?
What employees NEED to know

CONTEXT

What was the change in the competitive environment that caused the change in strategy that resulted in the organizational change?
Do you and your leaders share context from top to bottom of your organization?

Shared context “connects the dots” for employees

Starting from a point of shared context sets the foundation for action

Candidly sharing context builds trust – even when the future is uncertain – and helps prevent surprises

Start sharing now – don’t pile context sharing on top of immediate change
## Your organization’s context

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**Tips for understanding context:**
Be curious, read, ask questions, follow thought leaders, go to conferences, connect the dots, reflect

**What do we know now?**
**What do we need to know?**
**Who has the information?**
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### History
- History
- Statistics
- Lifetime value
- Buying habits
- Share of spend
- Satisfaction
- Perception
- Influencers
- Trends

### Vision, Mission, Culture
- History
- Economy
- Laws & regulations
- Government stability
- Taxation
- Sustainability
- Workforce
- Geography
- Energy
- Climate

### Short- and long-term strategy
- History
- Key indicators
- Market share
- Industry drivers
- Competitors
- Materials/inputs
- Technology
- Labor
- Supply & demand

### Financial results & goals
- History
- Values
- Preferred work style & environment
- Desired work-life balance
- Future plans

### Processes
- History
- Values

### Organization
- History
- Values

### Culture
- History
- Values

### Operational data
- History
- Values

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### Tips for understanding context:
Be curious, read, ask questions, follow thought leaders, go to conferences, connect the dots, reflect
What employees NEED to know

HOW will the changes you are making position your organization for success?
Inspiring action through change

Communicate a clear vision of the future
Illuminate the path to get there
Celebrate successes along the way
Acknowledge choices, pitfalls, and emotions
What about the change will make employees feel this?

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How can you communicate the change so employees feel this?

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What HR professionals bring to the table
Knowledge of stakeholders
Knowledge of stakeholders

Directly impacted employees: job elimination, change in organizational structure/reporting, change in responsibilities

Indirectly impacted employees: do more with less, “am I next?”

Families (perception of company as a good place to work)

“Acquiring” employees and “acquired” employees (culture clash, competition)

Managers and supervisors (didn’t make the decision but have to implement)

You and your HR staff (know early, have to implement, have to support managers, have to be discreet)
Experience with consequences
Experience with consequences

Good – and poor – implementation and communication can impact:

RETENTION
RECRUITMENT
MORALE
REPUTATION
BRAND
FINANCIAL VALUE

And the success of your going-forward strategy
Eye for inconsistencies
Eye for inconsistencies

- Between the actions and the company’s values
- Between the actions and past communications
- Between the actions and external communications
- Between the actions and employees’ innate sense of “fairness”
Knowing what to measure
Knowing what to measure

Not just financial projections and results

Satisfaction
Engagement
Retention
Morale
Performance
Dialogue, debate & conversation

What are you measuring now?
Banking goodwill
Build a bank of goodwill **EVERY DAY** with employees

*You’ll need every bit of it during times of change*

**DON’T OVERDRAW THE BANK**
How to get a seat at the table

- Understand the context of change
- Bring a different point of view
- Be prepared
- Use relevant facts and examples
- Get to the point
- Make a recommendation
The ugly truths: most change does not achieve its promises.
And if you wait too long, things will get worse
Thank you!

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