

The Worst Mistakes in Communicating Workforce Reduction

Communicating job loss is tricky. No one likes to be on the receiving end of bad news. But employees in today's workplace are aware that business sometimes involves harsh realities.

Still, it's important to remember that you're affecting people's lives. The entire employee population will be watching to see how the company treats those who will be leaving. At the same time, you want to keep engagement as high as possible with the employees who are staying.

The goal is to strike a balance between compassion for those whose jobs are impacted and optimism for the future of the restructured company. Here are three mistakes to avoid:

1 Pretending that it's all positive news

Avoid the temptation to put excess spin on these communications, because employees will see right through that. Explain how the changes help the organization better align with the company vision. But don't sidestep the bad news, that the change will mean some employees won't have jobs anymore.

2 Saying nothing until things are final

Sometimes companies prefer to wait to share the news until after all the details have been ironed out. It's human nature to imagine the worst, so in the absence of communication regarding the change, employees' imaginations will fill in the gaps and rumors will begin seeping through your organization. Often, the rumors are worse than the reality.

Employees can accept the fact that you can't tell them everything right now. Setting realistic expectations can help them prepare emotionally for what's to come. When you do finally share the bad news, it can actually come as a relief for employees. Most people would rather know what to expect, even if it's not good news, than to be left in the dark.

3 Telling employees after everybody else knows

Before you start shooting off press releases or shareholder communications, make sure you've got your employee communications plan ready to go. You certainly want to avoid having your employees hear the news from someone outside the company, whether it's a neighbor who's related to top management or an industry blog.

The most important key to successfully communicating job reduction is to begin with a foundation of respect for the employees. That means treating employees like the intelligent adults they are, as well as putting yourself in their shoes. At Tribe, we often talk about the Golden Rule of Change: If you were an employee impacted by this news, what would you want to know? And when?

Tribe's experience includes work with some of the world's top brands.



TRIBE

Best Practices

What does Tribe do?

We're an internal communications agency working with global and national brands to build employee engagement.

We share our expertise through these monthly Best Practices one-pagers and the GoodCompanyBlog.com, as well as our industry magazine, the Tribe Report. You can see digital versions of past publications on Tribe's website. To subscribe, email Nick@Tribeinc.com.

www.tribeinc.com

Interested in knowing more about Tribe?

Please reach out to:

Steve Baskin
President and Chief Strategy Officer
(404) 256-5858
Steve@tribeinc.com