

Five Worst Mistakes in Communicating Layoffs

Change is hard. But when change involves loss of jobs, it's particularly unsettling, not only to the employees asked to leave but to those who stay as well. It's important to remember that the remaining employees will be watching to see how the company treats those whose jobs are going away.

In Tribe's national research with employees of large employers, 84 percent responded that change was handled "poorly" in their companies. If you'd prefer not to be part of that overwhelming majority, then here's what not to do:

- 1 DON'T PATRONIZE THEM BY WITHHOLDING NEGATIVE NEWS**

Employees say they'd rather know the truth, and if it's bad news, to know it as soon as possible. Knowing what's up helps them maintain some measure of control, in that they can begin to prepare, both mentally and logistically.
- 2 DON'T ASSUME EMPLOYEES GET ALL THEIR INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMPANY FROM THE COMPANY**

You don't want employees to hear the news from outside sources before the company announces it internally. Keep in mind that employees have plenty of other sources for information, from the financial news to the local news and from social media to social connections.
- 3 DON'T EXPECT MANAGERS TO ANSWER QUESTIONS OFF THE CUFF**

Employees should be hearing a consistent message about the changes, not one that's different depending on who's talking. Equip your managers with the tools and/or training they'll need to share current and accurate information with their teams. At the very least, give them talking points and answers to FAQs.
- 4 DON'T CONFUSE HONESTY WITH TRANSPARENCY**

Telling the truth is different from complete transparency. It isn't always practical to give employees the detailed back story and every step leading up to the decision. What's important is being honest about what's going to happen and what that means for employees.
- 5 DON'T DWELL ON THE DOWNSIDE FOREVER**

Communications around layoffs need to be handled honestly and respectfully, but at a certain point, it's time to move on. As soon as you're past that transition, shift focus quickly to what's positive about the future.

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DAVID YURMAN



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Best Practices

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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.

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