

LEADING THROUGH A REDUCTION IN FORCE

Communication Best Practices

Prepare. Prepare a private area that's reasonably comfortable and in which conversational voices will be clearly heard and understood.

Prepare mentally and physically for the conversation; manage your emotions, develop a clear vision for how you want the conversation to unfold, and try to align your body language to your message.

Direct. Be direct and resolute. Make your point quickly, calmly, and with compassion. State the purpose of the conversation up front and follow it up with any positive information related to support (e.g. transition support, severance, benefits, or other resources).

For example, you may consider saying, "Unfortunately, the purpose of today's meeting is to inform you that your employment with the organization has come to an end. We've hired a firm to help you successfully land on your feet, and we'll be providing more details."

Listen. Once you've clearly communicated your message, listen if the employee wants to talk. To avoid debate, argument, or resistance, offer to schedule an appointment with the appropriate personnel at a later date but try not to interrupt or cut off the employee.

Provide. Provide all helpful information including details related to transition support, timelines, administrative procedures, and other relevant information to help reduce uncertainty and build confidence.

Argue. Don't argue, interrupt, ignore, or shut down the employee. If necessary, seek additional support from the appropriate personnel but do not escalate the situation in any way.

Undermine. Don't undermine your leadership, or senior leaders, by disagreeing with the decision or making false promises. This will only make it more difficult on the employee in the long run and could create problems for you in the future.

Procrastinate. Don't procrastinate during the conversation. Make your point quickly and clearly.

NEVER. Never discuss how difficult it is on you as the manager; the employee doesn't care because this is about them.

DON'T

DO

Notes:



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A Communication Guide for Managers

Breaking the news to a fellow employee that your organization can no longer employ them is one of the toughest challenges a manager can face. Emotions run high, confusion sets in, and many questions flood the mind. Feelings of guilt, uncertainty, anxiety, and sadness are all natural occurrences in these unfortunate circumstances.

But as a manager, it's critically important to cut through this fog. **You will be depended upon to communicate clearly, concisely, and with compassion.** Remember - there is no easy way to break the news; there are only bad ways and better ways. This guide will support your efforts to communicate in a better way - a way that research shows can reduce fear and anxiety, give confidence to those being let go, and show compassion to all those affected.

Communication Checklist

Helpful topics could include:

- Transition support with contact information and next steps
- Insurance information
- Clearly communicate how they will be gathering belongings and turning over keys and other company property
- Benefits
- Last paycheck
- Other human resources policies
- An estimated date when the above details will be provided by the appropriate personnel if they will not be provided during the initial conversation.

Quick Tips

1. Compassion and empathy are key
2. Direct and resolute
3. Rehearse your message
4. Organize your space & message
5. Have severance package with you
6. Compose your physical & emotional appearance
7. Listen
8. Have a tissue box
9. Conduct communication in an office with no windows. If there are windows, draw the blinds.