

# Communication

## Bulletin *for Managers & Supervisors*™

A fast-read source of information to help managers communicate better within and between departments, twice a month.

August 3, 2020



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## 7-step plan for change: Be the leader who eases employee fear

*Help the team see where it's headed and how it'll get there*

Changes ahead! That's the case in businesses everywhere today: Change is coming, and managers and supervisors need to lead their employees through those uncertain – and likely unnerving – times.

“Employees may feel unsure and fearful about any new direction ... or change they are forced to deal with,” says Kate Zabriskie, president of Business Training Works Inc. “As their leader, their cues on how to act and feel will come directly from you.”

### Build, tweak an action plan

The best way to lead through change: Have a solid action plan in place.

Here's a seven-step plan for change. Keep it as a guideline, and tweak it with each unique change you and your people face:

#### 1. Clarify goals

Clearly define objectives and how you'll support employees throughout the change. This does two important things: It gives employees a firm sense of what they're moving toward and a picture of their roles and level of support throughout it.

#### 2. Identify leaders

Some employees can be champions and leaders throughout the changes because they:

*Please see Change ... on Page 2.*

### *Sharpen Your Judgment*

## Employee requested accommodation, transferred

“Heidi, thanks for meeting me this morning,” said Heidi's manager, Tara.

“No problem,” said Heidi. “What did you want to talk about?”

“Actually, we'd like to move you to our other location. It's only a few miles from here, and you'd be working the same hours and getting the same pay rate,” explained Tara.

“But why?” asked Heidi. “What did I do?”

“Nothing,” said Tara. “We just thought ...”

“Wait, is this about the ADA accommodation request I made a few months ago?” asked Heidi.

“Of course not,” said Tara. “You asked for an accommodation because your carpal tunnel

syndrome was worse and we gave it to you.

“Look, this isn't some kind of punishment. We just needed to consolidate.”

#### Too close for comfort?

Heidi was transferred the next week. After thinking about it for a while, she filed a claim accusing her company of retaliation for asking for an ADA accommodation.

While Tara knew the timing wasn't ideal – a few months after Heidi's accommodation request – she decided the firm could get the case dismissed. After all, the accommodation had nothing to do with the transfer.

Did Tara's company win?

This regular feature sharpens your thinking and helps keep both you and your firm out of trouble. It describes a real legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.

*Make your decision, then please turn to Page 4 for the court's ruling.*

### *The Purpose of Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors*

*Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors* provides relevant and actionable business ideas to help managers and supervisors improve communication and increase effectiveness.

The *Bulletin* helps improve communication within and between departments, a major goal for most businesses seeking better performance.

All in a fast-read format, twice a month.

## Change ...

(continued from Page 1)

- have experience in relation to the changes
- adapt quickly, and/or
- support change.

Ask them to be team leaders in early adoption, peer trainers and confidence builders with the changes.

### 3. Map the move

You'll have to address processes, goals, expectations and tasks.

To give employees some stability through the change, draw an outline that shows current processes, goals, expectations and tasks, and what they'll look like when the change is completed.

You don't need the exact road map on how you'll get from one end to the other. Leave that area flexible for employees' ideas on how to change.

### 4. Regularly re-calculate direction

Change doesn't happen in a linear path. You'll make great strides and experience setbacks.

The key to handling them is to continually communicate with the team on progress (this deters gossip, too) and get input on how to go to the next step.

### 5. Recognize and face challenges

With change comes challenge, which can't be swept under the rug.

Share what you think can go wrong early, and ask employees for ideas on how to avoid the issues. Tell them about roadblocks as soon as you hit them and ask for feedback.

### 6. Honor the past

Change often means ditching the old way of doing things. That can unsettle some employees who've always done things the "old way" and upset employees who created the "old way."

That's why it's important to recognize how past efforts, projects and ideas paved the way for the change. And don't toss everything to the curb immediately. You might find throughout change that some original ideas and processes still work best.

### 7. Set new standards

When changes are done, re-clarify new expectations – from performance goals to behavior standards. Tell employees you're proud of their adaptability and confident in their abilities to meet evolving expectations.

*Source: Business Training Works Inc., helps businesses create customer service strategies and live up to what's promised, [businesstrainingworks.com](http://businesstrainingworks.com)*

## COMMUNICATION BRIEFS

### ■ 4 questions you need to ask your remote workers

It's more difficult to gauge employees' engagement when they work remotely. You can't see energy levels and reactions to what's going on.

To get a feel for their engagement level – and help if it's low – regularly ask:

- **How would you describe your level of energy these days?** This lets them open up so you can understand their new working world.
- **What fears do you have around the team and/or the company?** You can help ease anxiety or at least clarify some uncertainties.
- **Are you equipped to do your job well?** You want them to succeed.
- **What can I do to help create an environment where you can do your best work remotely?** Take steps to help them get better.

*Source: KnowYourTeam.com, [tinyurl.com/questions477](http://tinyurl.com/questions477)*

### ■ Try a paradox mindset to overcome challenges

Tweaking your mindset might help leaders (and their employees) handle the overload of demands these days.

Move toward a paradox mindset – from an "either/or" outlook to a "both/and" outlook.

With an either/or outlook, many people feel torn between family and work demands. But with a both/and outlook, the reality changes. You can accomplish both by taking these steps:

**1. Reframe the question.** Don't ask, "Should I do X or Y?" Ask, "How can I do both X and Y at an acceptable level?"

**2. Accept the tension and move forward with some discomfort.** Understand that problems and challenges are a common state – not out of the ordinary – and you can accept the tension sooner.

**3. Distance yourself and look for different possibilities.** Take time or physical distance from the situation to gain or ask for new insight into resolving the conflict.

*Source: [tinyurl.com/paradox481](http://tinyurl.com/paradox481)*

## TECH CORNER

### Successful virtual meeting guidelines from experts

These days it seems like managers are always on a Microsoft Teams, Zoom or Skype meeting.

While it doesn't matter what platform you use, what you do during a meeting does. Better meetings lead to better outcomes.

### 6 ideas to use

Here are some tips from *Harvard Business Review* on how to conduct a productive virtual meeting:

- If you're going to share a video during the meeting, try it beforehand.

- Don't make the meeting longer than it has to be. People are busy.
- Call on people. Get them involved by asking for their opinions.
- Don't multitask. Be present. It's no different than an in-person meeting. If you were in a conference room with your team, you wouldn't take care of your latest Amazon order.
- Be professional. Don't wear pajamas to your virtual meeting just because you're at home.
- Lean into the camera. Don't lean back in your chair. Leaning into the camera helps you look and stay engaged with the meeting.

*Source: [tinyurl.com/HBRVirtMeetings](http://tinyurl.com/HBRVirtMeetings)*

## Real Problems, Real Solutions

Our subscribers come from a broad range of organizations, large and small. In this regular networking feature, three of them share their successes in improving workplace communication.

### 1 Back to work with red, yellow, green approach

The way we work changed quite a bit during the coronavirus lockdown. Employees worked remotely, worked less or couldn't work at all.

When we got back to significant work, many of our employees and I wanted to tackle it all – every project and to-do list that was there before the crisis and every one that had crept in during it. That wasn't a sensible strategy!

#### Follow the light

We used the traffic light approach to tackle it all. We broke down work into three categories – Red, Yellow and Green lights. The rules:

Skip the Reds – things that caused us to stop to research, rethink, redo – for now. (Eventually, they may not be necessary anyway).

Put the Yellows – the things that are yielding to other necessities – on pause.

Move quickly and with purpose on the Greens – anything that needs nothing more than action.

Finally, don't try to juggle Yellows or Reds in with Greens. With that, we made great progress.

*(Simon Sinek, author and speaker, shared the success in a WorkHuman webinar, [tinyurl.com/lights481](https://tinyurl.com/lights481))*

### 2 Input from supervisor saved the day, workers

We were having a facility design meeting. Participants were discussing different layouts for storage units when one of my supervisors who had been part of our ergonomics improvement team spoke up and said, "We can't set up the shelves this way."

His reason: The set-up would create a risk based on an ergonomics assessment.

He then went on to offer another setup that wouldn't put our workers at risk for injuries.

#### Team participation is key

The supervisor was right. It was an ergonomically better system.

The participation by the supervisor in the meeting and the facility design process – bringing with him the knowledge he'd gained as part of the ergonomics improvement team – showed that including supervisors in safety teams worked.

*(Colin Brown, Professional and Organizational Advancement Manager, Board of Certified Safety Professionals, Indianapolis, at the Virtual AIHce EXP 2020)*

### 3 Better communication with the camera on

Even before the pandemic, we had a lot of virtual meetings – conference calls and video calls.

We accomplished some things, but there were still communication problems. And it'd only get worse with a rise in the number of distance meetings.

People didn't hear what others said or didn't understand everything that was covered – and often didn't speak up to ask for clarification.

#### Believe what you see

To avoid issues going forward, we switched more heavily to video calls. And here's the important part: We insisted people turn on their cameras.

People tend to believe more of what they see than just what they hear.

With video, they pick up on visual cues, interact better and correct communication miscues if they happen.

Now we accomplish more and communicate clearly.

*(Paul-Anthony Surdi, CEO, Academy of Responsible Tattooing, LLC, shared this success on SmartBrief's Young Entrepreneur Council)*



### YOUR LEGAL COACH

#### ■ Coronavirus curve ball: What can we do?

**Question:** An employee tells us now she has underlying health issues, and can't come back until there's a vaccine for the coronavirus. What can we do?

**Answer:** The White House handed out a three-phase guideline for return to work. It includes special accommodations for vulnerable employees until the third phase, says Jennifer Merrigan Fay, an employment law partner at Goodwin Procter LLP.

Vulnerable employees include those with serious underlying health conditions such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma and compromised immune systems. And the final phase is "unrestricted staffing of worksites."

Merrigan Fay notes it's not an order: There's no enforcement power. One caveat: If the employee has an ADA-protected condition, you need to follow normal accommodation protocols.

**Sources:** [tinyurl.com/work481](https://tinyurl.com/work481), [tinyurl.com/merrigan481](https://tinyurl.com/merrigan481)

### LIGHTER SIDE

#### ■ Sometimes you can't rely on Mom to say the right thing

When things are tough at work, you can always count on Mom to make you feel better, right?

Not necessarily, as some moms show. Kids shared anecdotes on Twitter:

- Mom left a note: "I'm leaving for the weekend. I hid \$100 in your room for food. Clean your room to find it."
- Whenever I said I didn't like a photo of myself, my mom said, "Want a better picture? Get a better face."
- Mom said, "Be nice to your brother. You might need one of his kidneys one day."
- I told mom I expected a boyfriend and new car for my birthday. She said, "A Ken doll and a Hot Wheels. Got it."

**Source:** [rd.com/jokes](https://rd.com/jokes)

## COMMUNICATION NEWS

## Make remote communications crystal clear

Some people love it, while others hate it. But what everyone can agree on is remote work has its challenges – especially communication.

Unfortunately, most people aren't good communicators, and only 50% of online communications are understood. The end result: loss of productivity in the office and at home.

### Missing body language

Online communication lacks feedback, empathy, connection and emotion. With in-person interactions, "we signal emotions, attitudes and intent through our body language," explains Nick Morgan, author of *Can You Hear Me?*

### How to master the 6 principles of influence

As a leader, you need to influence people's behavior and attitude every day.

To do it positively and effectively, follow researcher and author Robert Cialdini's six principles of influence:

**The Principle of Liking.** You want to genuinely like other people and communicate that to them to build good relationships.

**The Principle of Reciprocity.** Leaders want to *help others get what they want*, not get what you want in return for the help.

**The Principle of Authority.** Learn and work

Here are some communication tips to keep in mind when working remotely:

1. **Give lots of info.** Detail who, what, when, where, why, how and anything else, so there's no misinterpretation.
2. **Don't use vague words.** Forget about using words such as *it, that, this, him, her, he, she, them, they*, etc. Name people, places and things to avoid confusion.
3. **Be empathic.** If a person is stressed about their kids being noisy during a meeting, they won't be productive. Either adjust the meeting time or have a good laugh over it.

*Info: [tinyurl.com/remoteworkcom](http://tinyurl.com/remoteworkcom)*

diligently to become an authority in an area relevant to the people you want to influence.

**The Principle of Social Proof.** Show people how others like them have changed behavior or attitude and benefited from it.

**The Principle of Consistency.** Be as good as your word. Gain small increments of agreement to help others change – and live up to your end of the expectation.

**The Principle of Scarcity.** Help people see a need to change before an opportunity is gone.

*Source: [tinyurl.com/influence481](http://tinyurl.com/influence481)*

### Quotes

I don't look to jump over 7-foot bars. I look for 1-foot bars that I can step over.

– Warren Buffet

You can't have a million dollar dream with a minimum wage work ethic.

– Stephen Hogan

The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination.

– Albert Einstein

## Sharpen Your Judgment – The Decision

(continued from Page 1)

Yes, the company won after a court threw out the case.

The employee's attorney argued the transfer was retaliation for her ADA accommodation because the timing was too close for comfort.

He went on to say her transfer was the company's way of not having to deal with her restrictions.

The company, however, disagreed, pointing to the fact it granted her accommodation request soon after she asked for it. Plus, she was getting the same hours and salary, and the new location was only three miles away.

Due to the evidence, the court said nothing changed for the employee after the transfer.

Therefore, the transfer wasn't retaliatory because it was the result of the company restructuring.

### Be aware of potential 'adverse actions'

This case could've gone differently if her new job was a step or two down the ladder, she took a pay cut or it increased her commute significantly.

When dealing with an ADA request, you need to be mindful of anything that could be considered an adverse action. Clear documentation of any performance issues is an added protection.

(Based on *Lewis v. Clark County School District*. Dramatized for effect.)

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