

# Communication

## Bulletin <sup>TM</sup> for Managers & Supervisors

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

August 16, 2021



If you haven't been to our website recently, here's exclusive online content you've been missing:  
[www.CommunicationBulletin.com](http://www.CommunicationBulletin.com)



### Management Skills Center

Improve your skills and manage better



### Professional Writing Center

Hundreds of tips to get writing right

## Moving past a work crisis: 4 steps to learn and become better

*'Just get over it' isn't the way to handle a difficult situation*

A work crisis has passed: So you feel like you can breathe a big sigh of relief and move on.

Not so fast!

Leaders want to do more than “just get over it” in any crisis – from a department shakeup to a pandemic-fueled upheaval. Focus on stability before moving full steam ahead.

“It's here where many companies drop the ball. Some semblance of normal life returns, work gets busy, and it feels like there is no more time to spend on the trauma,” say Mark Goulston and Diana Hendel, authors of *Trauma to Triumph: A Roadmap for Leading Through Disruption*.

“But if you stop now, the impact of your initial hard work will be lost.”

It starts with the right conversation after a crisis has seemingly passed.

Here's what to do:

### Take a 'Look Back'

Also called an “After Action Review” or “Postmortem,” a “Look Back” is a structured review to figure out what happened, why it happened and how to handle it in the future.

Do it as soon as you recognize the crisis has ended – for instance, once you confirm everyone is safe following a natural disaster or when operations are running after a sudden disruption.

The goal is to recap the events, gather

*Please see Crisis ... on Page 2.*

### Sharpen Your Judgment

## New hire breaks the news and is fired

“I feel like you lied to us,” said Supervisor James Coughlin. “We don't take that lightly here.”

“It wasn't a lie,” said new employee Amanda Patterson. “I didn't think it mattered. And no one asked about it.”

“Of course, no one asked if you were pregnant throughout the hiring process,” James said. “We can't, won't and don't.”

“But then you train for a week, collect a paycheck and drop this on us?” James said.

“I thought you might want to know now so you can plan,” Amanda said. “I'm giving you plenty of time – six months probably – before I'll need time off. You can find a temp by then.”

“Well, if you don't catch on in training a little

bit faster, I may be looking for a permanent replacement sooner,” James said.

### Performance falters

“What?” asked Amanda. “The trainer said I was doing fine, as good as anyone else.”

“Not exactly how I've seen it,” James said.

Without much notice, James fired Amanda, claiming she failed to disclose important info and wasn't performing as expected in training.

Amanda felt the reasoning was weak – and more along the lines of bias under the Pregnancy Discrimination Act. She contacted the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and sued. The company fought the case. Did it 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.

## Crisis ...

(continued from Page 1)

facts, get feedback and identify gaps in protocol or lapses in performance.

### Step 1: Gather a team

Ask fellow leaders and employees who have different, level-headed outlooks to join in. Pick a facilitator and recordkeeper. Use a flip chart if you're together or a digital whiteboard if you're in a Zoom meeting.

### Step 2: Establish ground rules

Either call on your usual meeting protocols or create rules for this special purpose. The authors recommend these:

- One person speaks at a time.
- No one points fingers.
- Be honest and transparent about what was seen, heard and done.

### Step 3: Lay the groundwork

This isn't an easy conversation, so it's important everyone understands and agrees to:

- hearing and accepting different points of view
- allowing people to express emotions and opinions, and
- getting a full perspective of what happened before making decisions.

## TECH CORNER

### Use the phone (to talk) again! 6 etiquette keys

Most of us almost always have a phone in reach.

Yet we seldom use it for its original purpose – to talk to people. Instead, we text, post, FaceTime and scroll.

But business still needs conversations – and some of us may have lost touch with professional phone etiquette.

#### Reminders for today

So here are your reminders:

- **Record a greeting.** People need to know they reached the right person – not just the number they dialed.

### Step 4: Ask the right questions

You want some structure to the “Look Back” conversation so you're sure you learn from the crisis.

Answering the right questions – not necessarily all of them – will help.

Goulston and Hendel offer these:

- **Positives:** What went well? What were our strengths? Where did we shine?
- **Negatives:** What went wrong? What were our weaknesses? Where was there confusion or conflict?
- **Process:** Which processes were followed and not followed? Why didn't people follow processes? Were they overwhelmed or unaware of plans, processes or policies?
- **Policy:** What happened that wasn't covered in a policy or process? What policies were unclear and which inhibited rapid decision making?
- **Communication:** What helped or hindered communication with employees and/or customers? What questions remain and how will we communicate the answers?

### Step 5: Act

Document and summarize. Note who will take what actions and by when. That's when you can put the crisis in a rearview mirror.

*Source: HarperCollins Leadership Essentials, [tinyurl.com/crisistalk506](https://tinyurl.com/crisistalk506)*

- **Listen to your voicemail.** If not, you may miss a pay raise, important meeting, promotion, etc.
- **Speak clearly and slowly,** especially when you leave a message.
- **Repeat.** When you leave a message, say your name and number twice.
- **Answer with enthusiasm.** Say, “Hello, this is Michele!” (Add your name there, of course!)
- **Be conscientious.** When you take or make a call around others, turn off the speaker and/or bluetooth. Talk with a lower voice into your phone. Others don't need to hear the chat.

*Source: Corporate Intelligence Radio, [tinyurl.com/phone506](https://tinyurl.com/phone506)*

## COMMUNICATION BRIEFS

### ■ Why change fails – and how to win at it

Why do we keep doing the same old things when the same old things don't get better results?

Sorry to say, but many times leaders get in they way of positive change. In fact, about 70% of organizational changes fail. Here's how to win when trying to make positive changes:

- **Overestimate the work.** It'll take more than you think to make change happen, so plan an extra 25% effort.
- **Underestimate acceptance.** People still need to do their day-to-day work while adapting to change. That spurs resistance. Give them extra time to accept and fully transition.
- **Do your part.** Leaders can't get full-on change acceptance if they don't roll up their sleeves and make it happen, too.

*Source: HBR, [tinyurl.com/change506](https://tinyurl.com/change506)*

### ■ WFH ideas that will make work in the office better

Many people liked working from home because they got more done.

Back in the office, these three tips can help continue that productivity level:

- **Start Quiet Hours.** That's a time void of meetings, sticking heads in colleagues' doors, chatting in hallways and anything disruptive.
- **Stop useless stuff.** Review the processes and policies that were abandoned during the work-from-home days to completely eliminate unproductive, location-based habits.
- **Curb meetings.** People working from home communicated differently than they did on-site. They've leaned on apps, email and patience, realizing they don't need immediate answers or interaction. Leverage those forms of communication – and levels of patience – to have better meetings. Call for fewer meetings and make them shorter by holding people accountable for gathering and responding to information.

*Source: Let's Grow Leaders, [tinyurl.com/quiet506](https://tinyurl.com/quiet506)*

## 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 Hiring practice that keeps teams strong, effective

We like to hire “top talent” – and compensate them accordingly – to help us achieve greater success.

But there can be a problem with hiring the best performers in your industry. Some come with baggage.

Their performance looks great on paper, but it comes with problems – usually in relationships.

#### Watch for ‘jerks’

So I encourage all my leaders: Don’t hire any brilliant jerks. These candidates don’t work well in teams, and we need *talent on teams*.

One way to make sure we don’t hire brilliant jerks: We look for proof candidates take personal responsibility on the job seriously and show others professional respect.

We might ask questions about failure and listen for how they describe their role in it and reaction to others involved. If they go for glory or point fingers in defeat, it’s a bad sign.

Their answers help us weed out brilliant jerks and keep responsible, respectful hires.

*(Reed Hastings, CEO, Netflix, shared this success on the Freakonomics Radio Book Club)*

### 2 Dub it ‘training,’ and they will collaborate

When we had companywide goals, we needed departments that didn’t normally work together to collaborate.

That didn’t always work. Folks in one department, who thought they were the lead on the project, might have monopolized the plan. Or people in another department, who felt they didn’t have any obvious thing to contribute to the goal, would clam up.

#### Picked up the ‘learning’ attitude

We wanted everyone to participate and work together toward goals.

So we changed the boardroom meeting approach. Instead, we held workshops and boot camps. That way, everyone went in with a “learning” attitude rather than a “take charge” or “bystander” attitude.

We’d give background information and training specific to the topic. Everyone, regardless of their department, knew enough to contribute. Plus, they saw the meetings as a benefit to their careers. Now teams collaborate better.

*(Matthew Capala, Founder and Managing Director, Aphametic, Miami, shared this success in SmartBrief)*

### 3 Back-in-office options plan is a success

When it was time to come back to the office after working from home because of the pandemic, employees expressed mixed feelings. Some were excited. Some hated the idea. Some were on the fence.

We wanted to make them all as comfortable as possible. So the first thing we did was poll to see who wanted to come back and when. Then we opened, letting in those who wanted to be back on-site.

#### You choose the best option

We set the bar – when we reached 75% capacity, employees could choose their ongoing work plan: fully remote, fully on-site with a dedicated desk in the office, or hybrid with a shared desk on-site some days and remote other days. The hybrid “flex” plan also included a stipend.

Most opted for the “flex” plan, and so far it’s working well to satisfy everyone’s preferences while keeping us productive.

*(Diana Marchese, Head of People Experience, Snyk, Boston, shared this success in the Wall Street Journal, tinyurl.com/office506)*



### YOUR LEGAL COACH

#### How do we handle COVID-19 ‘long-haulers’?

**Question:** We have employees who contracted COVID-19 and now experience long-term effects. Does that make them disabled under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

**Answer:** Yes, it’s likely, says employment law attorney Fiona Ong with Shawe Rosenthal LLP.

Medical experts have said some long-term effects of COVID-19 are long-lasting fatigue, lung problems, joint pain and brain fog. Many – if not all – of those would fall under what the ADA defines as a disability: “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.”

Of course, you can offer an accommodation even if employees don’t meet ADA’s disability criteria, Ong says. Temporary accommodations can help and be removed at a later date when they aren’t necessary.

Encourage employees to talk to you about what’s going on.

**Source:** [tinyurl.com/longhaulers506](https://tinyurl.com/longhaulers506)

### LIGHTER SIDE

#### Who knew your spouse did that? Remote work lessons

Some couples learned new things about each other while spending extra time at home together in the pandemic months.

Much of it came to light during their working hours, as they shared space. Here’s what three revealed on Twitter:

- Hearing my wife in meetings and it dawns on me that she uses personnel management techniques on me all the time – @remotecancy
- A funny thing about quarantining is hearing your partner in full work mode for the first time. Like, I’m married to a “let’s circle back” guy – who knew? – @InLaurasWords
- I’m married to the guy who calls everyone “Chief” – @MarianCutler

**Source:** [RD.com](https://RD.com)

## COMMUNICATION NEWS

## Managers' new challenges – and how to deal

Whether you're back to your pre-pandemic work situation, or are in an altered one, challenges abound.

COVID-19 changed how and where people work. The proof is in the newest issues front-line managers face.

### The problems and solutions

HR experts say these are the big challenges:

- **Gauging morale.** Managers don't interact with employees as much now. So you can't even see if employees are happy or not. Try to survey more now to get a feel for engagement.
- **Monitoring health.** Many studies found

employee mental health suffered throughout the pandemic. And it's still difficult for managers to monitor employees for stress and burnout. One way to help: Continually share details about your mental health benefits and how employees can access those.

- **Monitoring behavior.** It's also tougher to make sure employees behave respectfully and professionally. You're less likely to see or hear bad behavior in action if people mostly interact online. Try to meet more one on one, even if it's a Zoom call, to find out how employees interact and feel.
- Source: HRMorning.com, tinyurl.com/challenges506*

### 3 keys to successfully recruit remotely

Nearly half of all companies plan to implement a hybrid work model – and a quarter already have it in place.

That makes recruiting more interesting!

“Remote hiring is going to be different from traditional hiring. It's important to recreate it,” suggests Annie Lin, VP of People at Lever.

### Getting it right

Three keys to getting it right:

- **Carry on with what worked.** Find ways to replicate each step. The closer you can come

to the original experience, the more likely you'll continue to hire successfully.

- **Use several platforms.** Gauge how well people communicate in all the channels they'll use regularly in a hybrid work model – email, phone, video conference, text, etc.
- **Widen the net.** If employees will work remotely, you can recruit outside your normal area. So post positions broadly on social media, recruiting sites and national outlets you never considered.

*Source: tinyurl.com/remoterecruit506*

## Sharpen Your Judgment – The Decision

(continued from Page 1)

No, the company lost when it settled the case, agreeing to pay the employee and issue her a letter of apology.

The EEOC claimed the woman was subject to pregnancy discrimination because she was let go when the employer found out about her pregnancy. She didn't have time to truly fail on the job and didn't commit any infractions, the attorneys noted.

The company's attorney argued the employee was deceptive in the job application process. Then she didn't perform well in training. That's why they fired her.

In the end, the company acknowledged that the pregnancy may have had something to do with her firing, and they agreed to

retrain supervisors and HR personnel on anti-discrimination laws.

### Director explains lesson

EEOC Phoenix District Office Regional Attorney Mary Jo O'Neill said: “Far too often, the EEOC sees employers explicitly referencing pregnancy when attempting to justify their decision to fire a pregnant employee or refuse to hire a pregnant applicant. Employers must understand they cannot base their employment decisions on whether or not an employee or applicant is expecting.”

(Based on *EEOC v. LogistiCare*. Dramatized for effect.)

### Quotes

Make each day your masterpiece.

– John Wooden

It is never too late to be what you might have been.

– George Eliot

There's nowhere you could be that isn't where you're meant to be.

– John Lennon

Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.

– Abraham Lincoln

EDITOR  
MICHELE MCGOVERN  
mmcgovern@pbp.com

MANAGING EDITOR:  
RENEE COCCHI  
rccochi@pbp.com

PRODUCTION EDITOR:  
JEN ERB

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR:  
CURT BROWN

Subscriptions: 800-220-5000

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting or other professional services. If legal or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought. — From a declaration of principles jointly adopted by a committee of the American Bar Association and a committee of publishers.

♻️ Printed on recycled paper.

Copyright © 2021 Progressive Business Publications. Please respect our copyright: Reproduction of this material is prohibited without prior permission. All rights reserved in all countries.

Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors (ISSN 1523-4290), issue date August 16, 2021, Vol. 23 No. 506, is published semi-monthly, (24 times a year) by Progressive Business Publications, 384 Technology Drive, Malvern, PA 19355; PHONE: 800-220-5000. FAX: 610-647-8089. Periodicals Postage Paid at West Chester, PA 19380. Postmaster: Send address changes to Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors, 384 Technology Drive, Malvern, PA 19355.