

# 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.

September 14, 2021



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## Together at last: 9 tips to help you speak publicly again

*You can't hide behind a computer camera anymore*

From the introvert behind a closed door to the extrovert down the hall, most people aren't used to being around others.

In addition, many aren't ready to speak publicly after a year in some degree of isolation.

For leaders, it was likely easier to sit – possibly in pajama bottoms and slippers! – behind a computer camera than it is to stand in front of the team again.

Fortunately, there's help from Ann Handley, author of *Everybody Writes: Your Go-To Guide to Creating Ridiculously Good Content*.

And it's not just for people who need to speak publicly again. These are “public speaking lessons for the Introverts, the Inexperienced, the Pathologically Shy, and

the Rusty-in-Need-of-a-Refresh,” Handley says.

Here are her nine tips:

### Re-frame a weakness as a strength

Get sweaty palms? Heart race? Stumble over words? You probably think those happen because you're terrified when speaking.

Look at it this way: You care so much about what you'll say, you're excited. Go with that!

### Plant support

Ask a colleague or trusted employee to sit in the back of the group and nod and smile as you speak, encouraging your momentum. You

*Please see Speak ... on Page 2.*

## Sharpen Your Judgment

### Leave denied: Is it gender discrimination?

“I need more leave. I can't make it any clearer,” said employee Bruce Hinton over the phone. “I'm not recovered, and I want an extension.”

Manager Sue Pitrone mentally calculated what she knew: *Bruce asked for medical leave five months ago, after he'd been out unexpectedly for a month. They granted him six month's medical leave, which included one retroactive. His team was stretched thin.*

“I don't know, Bruce,” Sue said. “We need you – or someone – here. Your teammates and supervisor struggle to keep up.”

“I can't believe you'd even bring up my supervisor,” Bruce said, his demeanor gaining a hostile edge.

“After that guy made those awful comments about being transgender,” he continued. “Sounds like this company has a problem with my identity more than my medical leave.”

“That's untrue, especially since you never filed an official complaint on those alleged comments,” Sue said. “But, I'll tell you what, I'll check on an extension. If we can't grant it, we'll follow up to talk about something that will work.”

### Files the suit

The company denied Bruce's extension, and the only follow-up he did was to file a gender discrimination suit.

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.

## Speak ...

(continued from Page 1)

might even give him or her a question or two to ask to open up a dialogue.

### Pick and rely on a crew

Pick five or six people in different parts of the room who you'll move your eyes to while you speak.

This will help you speak in turn to the entire room, not just the people in front – or your designee in the back.

### Use notes, not dictation

If you need notes, by all means use them. They can help control nerves.

But, don't write out your talk verbatim, which prevents you from interacting with the group and causes you to miss opportunities to give or get more relevant information.

### Focus on the talk, not the visuals

Keep slides simple – or don't use them at all, especially if all the information can be sent via email.

You want people to listen, not stare at a mediocre PowerPoint.

### Practice the pause

Force yourself to pause a second or two between every few sentences.

## TECH CORNER

### Virtual presentations: Master your technology

We covered in-person presentations in our *Cover Story*. Now, let's talk about mastering virtual presentations.

Even if you nail the content and delivery, you'll fail if the technology fails. And something will more than likely go wrong.

### Stay ahead of issues

To stay ahead of tech issues:

- Practice several times with every tool you'll use – video conferencing, document sharing, audio, visual and collaboration apps.

It'll help you avoid rushing through your points or talking past the most important information.

### Answer questions

If you allow questions throughout your chat, you open a better dialogue and avoid a monologue.

Your notes will help you get back on track when there is a question, too.

### Be prepared for questions

Two keys for better Q&A:

- Buy time and clarity when you don't know the answer immediately by responding to a question with, "What do you mean by ...?"
- Admit when you don't know. Nothing can destroy a presentation and your credibility more than giving bad or false information. If you don't have an answer for sure, say, "I don't know, and I will get back to you on it."

### Make questions matter

After you answer a question, ask the person who posed it, "Did I answer that completely for you?"

It tells them you're OK with clarifying and are interested in what they think, too.

Source: [annhandley.com](http://annhandley.com)

## COMMUNICATION BRIEFS

### ■ Make a communication impact with the power of 3

Think about the power of three. Its pattern dominates our lives, work and how we consume information.

Examples: Three Little Pigs. Blood, Sweat and Tears. Beginning, Middle, End. Easy as A,B,C.

People listen, comprehend and act in threes. So if you want your messages heard, understood and acted on, stick with three points. No more. No less.

John Millen, leadership consultant and founder of Reputation Group suggests this format to follow when you train, speak, share info, etc:

1. Share the major idea and give three points to support it.
2. Walk through each point. Add an example, stat or story to support each.
3. Summarize the idea in three points and ask people to act.

Source: [johnmillen.com](http://johnmillen.com)

### ■ Learn from new opinions, make better decisions

At work and in life, you hear different opinions every day. Sometimes, they're hard to swallow.

But most times, leaders can learn, at least a little, from other points of view. Those can help you identify blind spots, broaden your perspectives and build bridges in relationships. Best part: You can make better, more well-rounded decisions.

Mark Sanborn, a speaker and the Leadership Expert in Residence at High Point University, gives these tips to help you learn more from different points of view:

- Assume the person knows something you don't, and should.
- Aim to understand *why* your opinions differ, not just *what* the difference is.
- Make inquiries. Don't do an inquisition.
- Validate the other person's opinion by saying, "I hadn't considered that."

Source: [marksanborn.com](http://marksanborn.com)

## 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 How we get best-fit job candidates

Hiring is tougher than ever. Good candidates are nearly everywhere – and so are jobs they'd like to have.

We wanted to stand out in their job searches. And we wanted to find best-fit new employees – people who would succeed in their role with us.

#### Time for a change

To do that, we changed from posting traditional job descriptions that focused on past experience and future job duties.

Instead, we wrote more about outcomes we expect in the first year on the job.

That way, candidates could get a solid idea of whether it's a role that would challenge them and they could succeed in.

Another benefit: Good candidates who might've eliminated themselves from the position because they didn't have certain experience – but have the interest and ambition to reach higher – are more likely to apply.

This has helped us find and hire more best-fit candidates even as the job market tightens.

*(Caitlyn Metteer, Manager of Recruiting, Lever, San Francisco)*

### 2 A first step to become more inclusive

Many organizations want to improve Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) these days.

As leaders, the best source on how to expand DEI is often the company's Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) – or whatever you call employee groups that connect, support and work together on common interests.

We turned to our LGBTQIA+ community for help when it came to building a stronger DEI plan and better health care.

#### Already having the conversation

They were already talking about what was important to them. So we asked them to share with leadership.

Their insight helped us change handbooks to include inclusive language. Plus we were able to align our medical plan with international guidelines and recommendations that make us a more inclusive organization.

*(Zeno Peterson-Scott, Lead Trainer, The Phluid Project, spoke at Spring Health's webinar, "Beyond the Binary: Honoring Gender Expansive Communities at Work")*

### 3 Stay connected during remote work time

Many employees still work from home in the wake of the pandemic.

Right from the beginning we did different things to keep employees engaged, motivated and connected.

It worked while everyone got adjusted to remote work and wanted to feel like they did in the office.

But life evolved. And employees' time filled up outside of work with typical duties and diversions. It started to feel like the out-of-work things we hoped would keep the team connected were a burden, not a relief.

#### Time to switch gears

So we switched gears to better success. We added non-business activities – such as virtual lunches and trivia contests – to work hours.

People chatted socially and comfortably, feeling at ease that connecting with colleagues didn't interfere with their new work/life balance. We re-engaged and motivated the team.

*(Steven Khuong, Co-founder and CEO, Curacubby, shared this success on Forbes.com)*



### YOUR LEGAL COACH

#### ■ Employees won't return to work: What now?

**Question:** We have a few employees who say they refuse to work on-site as we reopen full-time. They don't think it's safe. Can we make them come in?

**Answer:** Yes, say employment law attorneys Ashley Steiner Kelly and Henry M. Perlowski, partners at Arnall, Golden, Gregory LLP.

Employees can't refuse to return to work at your workplace simply because they have a general fear of contracting COVID-19.

#### Know your responsibility

At the same time, it's still your responsibility to take appropriate precautions to assure the employees' safety while they're at work.

You want to follow federal and state guidelines on keeping employees safe and healthy. You can find more details on those at [tinyurl.com/covidregs508](https://tinyurl.com/covidregs508).

**Source:** [tinyurl.com/answer508](https://tinyurl.com/answer508)

### LIGHTER SIDE

#### ■ One line is all some people need to make work fun

One line: That's all it takes for some workers to make colleagues laugh.

Here's proof: A collection of one-liners pulled from *OneLineFun.com*

- When my boss asked me, "Who is the stupid one, me or him?" I told him everyone knows he doesn't hire stupid people.
- Claustrophobic people are more productive thinking out of the box.
- My boss is going to fire the employee with the worst posture. I have a hunch it might be me.
- It's OK Microsoft Excel, even my love life is not responding.
- Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

## COMMUNICATION NEWS

## Motivate those who want to stay remote

Some employees would rather stay remote forever. And it's hurting morale.

Two-thirds of employees in a Paychex survey said team morale was high before COVID-19. Now, less than half believe it is.

So how can you re-engage and motivate even those who dream of working from home forever?

### 3 keys to re-engagement

Try these tactics:

- **Train again.** Almost half of workers would want training or re-skilling in the next year. Help them do their jobs better. Even better,

offer soft-skill training – such as public speaking or problem solving – to help them improve life skills, too.

- **Make your space an incentive.** Some companies now offer perks for coming into the office, such as stipends for travel, gym memberships and free meals.
- **Check on your traditional motivational tactics.** Do you still recognize and reward employees for great work? Do you maintain a culture where employees feel cared about? Can employees recognize and reward each other for extra efforts and support?

*Source: HRMorning.com, tinyurl.com/motivate508*

### Why people lie at work – and what to do about it

Here's why people lie at work – and what you can do to encourage truth. They:

- **fear upsetting the applecart.** Sometimes employees are afraid the truth will upset others or cause a conflict. *Fix:* Make it safe for employees to tell the ugly truth. Don't overreact when the truth is negative – and don't tolerate anyone's overreactions. Instead, focus on constructive ways to use hard truths.
- **don't want to expose themselves.** Sometimes people lie because they don't want the boss or colleagues to know they fall short in

some way. *Fix:* Reduce the risk of screwing up. Give employees access to resources – tools, talks and training – that allow them to get help before they fail (and lie about it).

- **want to better themselves.** They might want to better their career or get more credit than they deserve at the expense of others. *Fix:* Create and consistently enforce consequences for documented lying behavior, up to and including termination.

*Source: Harvard Business Review, tinyurl.com/lies508*

## Sharpen Your Judgment – The Decision

(continued from Page 1)

Yes. The company won when the court dismissed the suit.

An attorney for the employee claimed he suffered gender discrimination because he was transgender. His boss's negative comments about transgenders proved there was a culture of bias. The medical leave extension denial was further proof, the attorney said.

The company's attorney argued there was no proof of gender discrimination. The employee didn't suffer any adverse employment actions. He simply requested a leave extension, and it couldn't be granted. The company had to go about business, and it was difficult to do without an employee in his position.

The court agreed: The employee was granted fair and deserved leave. And he didn't suffer any discrimination.

### Everyone treated the same

The key to this win: The employee couldn't prove that any cisgender employee in a similar situation was treated differently, specifically more favorably, than him.

Managers want to follow existing policies to handle requests consistently.

(Based on *Olivarez v. T-Mobile USA*.  
Dramatized for effect.)

### Quotes

Asomebody was once a nobody who wanted to and did.

– John Burroughs

You have to go through the low points to appreciate the highs in life.

– Dusty Hill

Only when the tide goes out do you discover who's been swimming naked.

– Warren Buffett

Laughter is life-giving. It makes you breathe.

– Kristin Chenoweth

EDITOR  
MICHELE MCGOVERN  
mmcgovern@pbp.com

MANAGING EDITOR:  
RENEE COCCHI  
rccocchi@pbp.com

PRODUCTION EDITOR:  
JEN ERB

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR:  
CURT BROWN

Subscriptions: 800-220-5000

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