

# Leading Out Loud

*An executive guide to  
communicating change*



**RON WIENS**

# ***What influences the progress of change?***

## **The reactions of those leaving**

- Upset, angry, possibly hostile
- May lobby politicians, public and press
- Present a formidable challenge



## **The reactions of those staying**

- Grieving loss of colleagues
- Frightened, they will be next
- Distracted by 'me' issues when you need them to be creative, focussed, entrepreneurial

## *People's reactions to change*

**People's reaction to change is governed by the way they are treated**

**You may not be able to alter WHAT changes, only the WAY it is communicated**

- How open are you?
- How often are you communicating?
- Are your communications reliable?
- Are you spending time listening?
- Are you giving people the opportunity to talk?

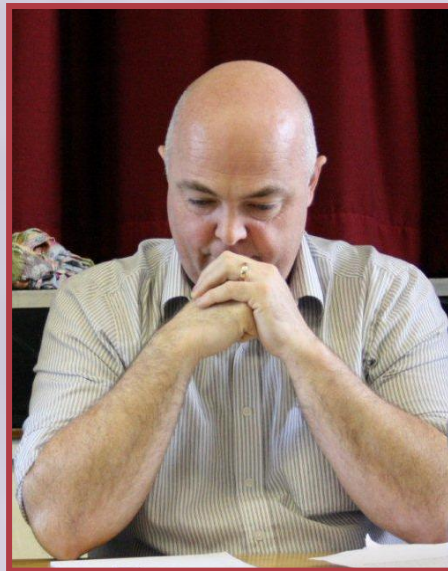


**The way in which news is communicated affects the way it is received**

## ***We avoid communicating bad news because ....***

### **We fear**

- An angry response - people may not like what we say and tell us so
- Losing
  - o Authority
  - o Control
  - o Respect
  - o Freedom to make decisions



**Not communicating means all these fears are more likely to come true!**



## *If you don't communicate*

### **You are likely to create**

- Shock and a resistance
- Mistrust amongst those going and those staying
- Delay in anyone making sense of the change
- and maybe even anger



**Communicate even when the news is bad and you will build trust and respect amongst those leaving and those staying**

## *Dealing with hard messages*

### **Bad news**

Put yourself in their shoes – if you were them what information would you want and how would you want to hear it?

- Bad news demands clear, honest communication.
- Give them the full context
- Explain the hard choices you have faced



**All you can inject into a 'situation that is grave' is your credibility**

## ***When to communicate***

**No matter how often you communicate it will never be enough!**

### **Communicate**

- When you have news
- When you have no news
- When you are uncertain

### **Why so often?**

- ***Because*** your staff need to hear from you – this means you won't always be as ready as you would like
- ***Because*** communications is also about building and maintaining connections with your staff

## ***The Nuts & Bolts of Communicating***

### **1. Talk to people face to face**

**Why?** Face-to-face transforms your communication from information-sharing to dialogue – only when you create the opportunity for dialogue do people really hear what you have to say

### **2. Keep your language plain & jargon free**

**Why?** People need to understand what you are saying

### **3. Be straight-forward – don't sugar-coat**

**Why?** Even though the news may be bad for people, by being straight forward, they will at least know they can trust you. People will respect your courage in telling them the truth.

### **4. Listen**

**Why?** Allocate half of your communication time for listening and reflecting back what you have heard - when people feel listened to, they feel respected and when they feel respected, they will listen to you



## ***The Nuts & Bolts of Communicating***

### **5. Don't read from a prepared text**

**Why?** Reading from a document distances you from your people and makes you look like you are afraid of engaging in conversation

### **6. Keep your slides to a minimum**

**Why?** To build connection with your people, they need to connect with you and not the screen - so use slides just to emphasise key points

### **7. Communicate at least every 6 weeks**

**Why?** People forget half what they have been told within about 6 weeks of hearing it. They then start to fill in the blanks with what they thought you said – the birth of rumour and miss-information

### **8. Keep reminding people why the change is happening**

**Why?** Because people forget why the changes are needed

## ***The Communications Process***

### **1. Create a communications schedule for:**

- ✓ Your face to face meetings
- ✓ Your video conferencing sessions
- ✓ Your email updates
- ✓ Your regular newsletter/blog
- ✓ Let staff know how & when to access your communications

### **2. Select a member of your staff to:**

- ✓ Draft speakers notes for your live sessions
- ✓ Draft your regular written updates
- ✓ Ensure appropriate sign off for all communications
- ✓ Ensure information is distributed to staff
- ✓ Network with staff and gauge their feelings
- ✓ Give you honest feedback

*This needs to be someone who understands the change agenda*

### **3. Select a member of your staff to organise:**

- ✓ Distribution lists, venues and bookings

## ***Communication = showing respect***

### **Whether you know a lot, a little or nothing**

- Be open
- Genuinely listen
- Give people a chance to disagree with you
- Consider what staff are telling you
- Share your decision making
- Make clear why you are doing or not doing something staff have raised with you
- Be frank and clear about the impact of your decisions
- If you don't know the answer, say so

### **Communicate and you will find:**

**People are more willing to accept the changes - even if the changes are not in their personal best interest**

# Communication



*The most powerful tool  
in your change tool-kit*