



QUANTUM
WORKPLACE

MANAGING CHANGE DURING A CRISIS

How Leaders Can Drive Change
During the COVID-19 Crisis

THE UNPRECEDENTED RESPONSE REQUIRED BY COVID-19 CRISIS

Coronavirus has grabbed headlines, devastated global economies, halted entire industries, and significantly changed the way we work.

Organizational leaders have had to act fast in the face of this volatile situation which changes day-to-day. This crisis has left even the most agile and well-prepared organizations shuffling to ensure customers and employees are ready for change.

A recent study by [Edelman](#) found that **51% of workers say they trust their employer is well-prepared to handle this crisis**, compared with 43% who said their country is well-prepared. Regardless of your organization's level of readiness for this global pandemic, fast and drastic changes are necessary to keep your organization growing.

During times of crisis, organizational leaders should establish feelings of trust with employees by continuously communicating accurate and clear information.

Though this may be a daunting challenge for many organizational and people leaders who are also experiencing personal change, this inflection point provides organizations with an opportunity to establish trust with their workforce and maintain business growth.

In this guide, we will discuss:

- 5 tips for effective communication
- Key questions for reflection and planning
- The importance of giving employees a voice
- How employee listening tools can help you manage change

Our goal is to enable and empower you to make effective decisions, help you transform your organization in an agile way, and improve employee trust, engagement, and retention in response to this global pandemic.

5 TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE CRISIS COMMUNICATION

The COVID-19 crisis has led HR departments and people leaders to reconsider what work looks like. To make matters worse, related economic volatility and supply chain disruptions have added to organizational insecurity. As the situation develops and changes daily, clear communication will continue to be paramount to organizational effectiveness, employee engagement, and productivity.

Employees are trying to make sense of their work and the way in which it is changing. Therefore, organizational leaders must individualize their communication to all employees and differentiate their change management approach. How?

1. Be authentic.

Workers turn toward their employers to get the straight facts. Communicate the business and people risks related to the crisis and what you are doing to mitigate those risks. Also, be willing to talk about what you don't know.

2. Be factual.

Be careful about the information you share. Stick to information from credible sources such as the CDC or WHO, rather than feeding into the media frenzy. There's also a fine line between being authentic and sharing too much of your own opinion.

3. Be clear.

Nothing is worse than having discordant communication that confuses your workforce. Ensure all senior leaders and team managers are speaking from the same script with one voice when cascading communication.

4. Be tactical.

Communicate very practically about what is changing specifically and how employee behavior, policies, and procedures should change.

5. Be empathetic.

Anxiety is running high for your employees, and everyone has unique challenges. How can you ensure that they have what they need to feel safe, engaged, and productive? By listening to them.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION DURING CRISIS

As organizations shift their workspaces, change standard procedures, and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders should clearly communicate the current state of the emergency and ongoing responses and changes. There are several key questions leaders should be asking as they roll out any changes related to this crisis.

- What is the current state of the crisis?
- How does this crisis impact our business and the way we work?
- What changes are we making?
- How will these changes impact different types of workers?
- What is the purpose or objective of the change?
- Why are we making the change at this time?
- What is the risk of not changing?
- What will the organization need to implement and sustain the change?
- How long will these changes last?
- What can we communicate before, during, and after the change?
- What are the key points that need to be communicated?
- How and who are going to deliver these changes?
- How often should communication be dispersed and repeated?
- Where can employees go if they have questions or feedback on the change?

CHANGE MANAGEMENT PREP TEMPLATES

Use these questions to audit your change management activities or to guide your thinking about new initiatives. Your answers can help you think through how to clearly articulate and disseminate information and ensure your organization, teams, and employees are resilient through change.

MESSAGE

What is the change?

What is the purpose or objective of the change?

Why are we making the change at this time?

What is the risk of not changing?

What will the organization need to implement and sustain the change?

What can we communicate before, during, and after the change?

What are the key points that need to be communicated?

How often will communications be repeated?
What is the timeline?

CHANGE MANAGEMENT PREP TEMPLATES

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CONTEXT

What other internal and external factors should we consider when thinking about the timing of the change and the delivery of communications?

Are there any events or key dates we should plan around?

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SENDER

Who will deliver communications about the change?

What communications will come from leaders? From managers? From change sponsors?

How will we empower the communicators to deliver communications and have the necessary conversations?

RECEIVER

Who will be impacted by the change and how?

What's in it for employees? How will they benefit from the change?

What's not in it for employees? How will they be negatively affected?

How can we tailor our message and communications for the different audiences within the organization?

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MEDIUM

What mediums will we use to communicate?

What face-to-face communication will be used?

FEEDBACK

How will we involve employees or seek input from them during the change process?

What opportunity will there be for two-way communication throughout the change?

How will we evaluate whether we successfully communicated the change?

BEFORE/DURING CHANGE TEMPLATES

Use these questions to solicit employee input as you are making a plan for change or in the early stages of implementation.

This is an important change for the organization to implement.

- ☐ STRONGLY AGREE ☐ AGREE ☐ SOMEWHAT AGREE
☐ SOMEWHAT DISAGREE ☐ DISAGREE ☐ STRONGLY DISAGREE

This change will have a positive impact on the organization.

- ☐ STRONGLY AGREE ☐ AGREE ☐ SOMEWHAT AGREE
☐ SOMEWHAT DISAGREE ☐ DISAGREE ☐ STRONGLY DISAGREE

What concerns do you have about the change?

What reasons this might not work?

What will make this successful?

What advice do you have, based on your past experiences?

POST CHANGE TEMPLATES

Use these questions to collect employee feedback on the success of change management and to gain insight about additional communication that might be needed.

This was an important change for the organization to implement.

- ☐ STRONGLY AGREE ☐ AGREE ☐ SOMEWHAT AGREE
☐ SOMEWHAT DISAGREE ☐ DISAGREE ☐ STRONGLY DISAGREE

This change has had a positive impact on the organization.

- ☐ STRONGLY AGREE ☐ AGREE ☐ SOMEWHAT AGREE
☐ SOMEWHAT DISAGREE ☐ DISAGREE ☐ STRONGLY DISAGREE

This change will have a positive impact on the organization in the future.

- ☐ STRONGLY AGREE ☐ AGREE ☐ SOMEWHAT AGREE
☐ SOMEWHAT DISAGREE ☐ DISAGREE ☐ STRONGLY DISAGREE

I understand why this change was made.

- ☐ STRONGLY AGREE ☐ AGREE ☐ SOMEWHAT AGREE
☐ SOMEWHAT DISAGREE ☐ DISAGREE ☐ STRONGLY DISAGREE

The organization communicated effectively about the change.

- ☐ STRONGLY AGREE ☐ AGREE ☐ SOMEWHAT AGREE
☐ SOMEWHAT DISAGREE ☐ DISAGREE ☐ STRONGLY DISAGREE

What concerns do you still have about the change?

What is needed to ensure this change is successful in the future?

CHANGE MANAGEMENT TEMPLATES

Ask employees these questions to understand how well your organization handles change management overall.

When the organization makes changes, I understand why.

- ☐ STRONGLY AGREE ☐ AGREE ☐ SOMEWHAT AGREE
☐ SOMEWHAT DISAGREE ☐ DISAGREE ☐ STRONGLY DISAGREE

Changes are made in a way that is consistent with our mission and long-term vision.

- ☐ STRONGLY AGREE ☐ AGREE ☐ SOMEWHAT AGREE
☐ SOMEWHAT DISAGREE ☐ DISAGREE ☐ STRONGLY DISAGREE

Our organization does a good job of informing employees of changes.

- ☐ STRONGLY AGREE ☐ AGREE ☐ SOMEWHAT AGREE
☐ SOMEWHAT DISAGREE ☐ DISAGREE ☐ STRONGLY DISAGREE

We effectively manage change in our organization.

- ☐ STRONGLY AGREE ☐ AGREE ☐ SOMEWHAT AGREE
☐ SOMEWHAT DISAGREE ☐ DISAGREE ☐ STRONGLY DISAGREE

I have confidence in this organization's leadership to successfully manage emerging challenges.

- ☐ STRONGLY AGREE ☐ AGREE ☐ SOMEWHAT AGREE
☐ SOMEWHAT DISAGREE ☐ DISAGREE ☐ STRONGLY DISAGREE

GIVING ALL EMPLOYEES A VOICE

Organizational communication from leaders is critical during a time of crisis and change, but shouldn't be a one-way street. Employees also need the ability to communicate their needs, concerns, and ideas for the future.

Giving all employees an opportunity to express their concerns and needs ensures that your teams can stay safe, engaged, and productive.

To understand if the changes that you are implementing in response to this crisis are effective or even being followed, organizational leaders should utilize a variety of listening tools and posts. Team leaders must also ensure that their communication aligns with the entire organization and that communication is cascading from organizational leaders to front-line workers.

HR leaders can use employee listening tools such as surveys, pulse capabilities, and one-on-one feedback tools to give employees a voice during a time of crisis and change.

Specifically, these tools can be used to:

- Determine readiness for the implemented changes
- Understand employee needs during a time of crisis
- Improve future responses to crisis or change management
- Benchmark engagement levels before and after the change
- Uncover employee perceptions of your change management strategy
- Determine how the change has impacted employee morale, turnover, or performance
- Build effective change management plans by incorporating employee advice
- Surface employee concerns and address them before they contribute to disengagement
- Better manage crises and change in the future

EMPLOYEE LISTENING TOOLS TO MANAGE COVID-19 CHANGE

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused major changes in the way we work. Most notably are those caused by quarantines and social distancing.

Millions of workers are working remotely—some for the first time in their careers. This disruption could have a major negative impact on productivity if workers are not ready for remote work.

Given this significant change, we've created a **Remote Work Readiness Survey** to ensure employees are set up for success when working remotely.

[>>FREE TEMPLATE: REMOTE WORK READINESS PULSE SURVEY](#)

Whether you are confronting a global pandemic or any number of emergency situations, organizational leaders should get a measure of reactions to the emergency management response. It is important that workers are receiving the appropriate information, feel supported, and have a place to air their concerns.

This should be assessed during the crisis management response as well as after the situation has normalized. Utilize this **Emergency/Crisis Management Pulse Survey** template to gauge the level of support and safety your employees feel.

[>>FREE TEMPLATE: EMERGENCY / CRISIS MANAGEMENT PULSE SURVEY](#)



CONCLUSION

Many have said that nothing is constant except for change. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought a whole new meaning to how fast and how drastic those changes can be. Agile organizations that rely on these change management strategies will fare far better than those that do not.

Though we are living and working through an unprecedented crisis, workers need clear communication and change management strategies to stay engaged and productive.

Senior organizational leaders should seize this opportunity to demonstrate a people-first culture and ensure their workforce has the information and tools necessary to perform their best. More importantly, leaders should listen to their workforce about how these changes will impact their working conditions, their business, and their customers.

We have a variety of resources available to help you navigate these uncertain times. We invite you to read, download, and share them with your team.

[VIEW MORE RESOURCES](#)

We're all in this together! If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us at hello@quantumworkplace.com.