

Introduction

Change is inevitable in any organization, how we communicate it determines its success. This workbook will help you develop effective communication strategies using best practices and interactive exercises.

Keep in mind the stages of acceptance:

1. Denial – Refusing to accept the reality of the situation, often as a defense mechanism
2. Anger – Frustration and resentment about the change, sometimes directed at others
3. Bargaining – Trying to negotiate or find a way to avoid the inevitable
4. Depression – Feeling sadness, hopelessness, or a sense of loss
5. Acceptance – Coming to terms with the situation and moving forward

The SCARF Model & Managing Employee Reactions

Using the **SCARF model** to communicate change effectively helps reduce resistance and increase engagement by addressing the brain's natural threat and reward responses. Here's how you can apply each element when communicating change:

1. Status – Protect and Elevate Perceived Value

How change affects people's sense of status: Employees may feel their role, expertise, or importance is diminished due to change.

✔ What to do:

- Acknowledge contributions and expertise before introducing the change.
- Frame the change as an opportunity for growth and development.
- Provide recognition and positive reinforcement throughout the process.

💡 *Example: Instead of saying, "We're restructuring roles," say, "We're evolving our structure to better leverage your skills and expertise."*

2. Certainty – Provide Clarity and Reduce Ambiguity

How change creates uncertainty: People fear the unknown, which can lead to anxiety and resistance.

✔ What to do:

- Clearly explain what is changing, why, and how it will affect individuals.
- Provide timelines, next steps, and regular updates.
- Be transparent and answer questions openly.

💡 *Example: Instead of saying, "Big changes are coming soon," say, "Starting next quarter, we are adopting a new system. Training sessions will be scheduled next month, and you'll have resources to support the transition."*

3. Autonomy – Give People a Sense of Control

How change threatens autonomy: Employees may feel powerless if they believe change is being imposed on them.

✔ What to do:

- Involve employees in decision-making where possible.
- Offer choices in how they adapt to the change (e.g., different training methods, phased transitions).
- Encourage feedback and problem-solving input.

💡 *Example: Instead of saying, "We're implementing this new process," say, "Here's the new process we're considering. We'd love your input on how to best implement it."*

4. Relatedness – Strengthen Social Connections

How change impacts relationships: People may feel disconnected, uncertain about new team dynamics, or worry about losing their support network.

✔ What to do:

- Foster a sense of teamwork and shared purpose.
- Assign mentors or change champions to support colleagues.
- Create open forums for discussions and peer support.

💡 *Example:* Instead of saying, "Your department is merging with another," say, "We're bringing teams together to strengthen collaboration. We'll hold team-building sessions to ensure a smooth transition."

5. Fairness – Ensure Perceived Equity

How change can feel unfair: If employees feel decisions are being made without justification or that certain groups are unfairly affected, resistance will rise.

✔ What to do:

- Clearly explain the rationale behind decisions.
- Ensure consistency in how changes are applied across teams.
- Provide avenues for employees to voice concerns and ask questions.

💡 *Example:* Instead of saying, "We had to make these cuts," say, "We evaluated multiple options and made this decision to ensure long-term stability. Here's how we are supporting those impacted."

The 4 P's of Communicating Change

1. Purpose – Why is this change happening and why is it important?

Employees need to understand the **why** behind the change. Clearly articulate the reason and reinforce it frequently.

What information do you currently have, and what is still unknown?

What emotions might employees be feeling because of this change?

Negative Emotions

- Uncertainty about the future
- Worry about job security
- Uncertainty about new responsibilities
- Worry about adapting to new systems, roles, or expectations
- Loss of workplace friendship or team
- Uncertainty about new leader
- Hesitation or reluctance to accept change
- Worry about disruption to routine
- Fear of learning new systems or processes
- Feeling unheard or not having a say
- Confusion about the reason for the change or how it will affect daily work
- Worry about increased workload
- Feeling pressure to adapt quickly
- Feeling disconnected from the old ways of working



Positive Emotions

- Enthusiasm for new opportunities
- Excitement to learn new technologies
- Excitement for opportunity for career growth and/or personal development
- Optimistic about a better future for the organization
- Motivation to learn new skills
- Excitement to take on new challenges, or advance professionally
- Feeling empowered when successfully adapting to change.
- Feeling of relief if the change resolves long-standing issues or improves efficiency

What specific concerns might they have? (job security, lifestyle change, etc.)

2. Picture – What does success look like?

Help employees visualize the outcome. The clearer the vision, the easier it is to gain buy-in.

Describe what the change will look like after it is complete.



3. Plan – How are we going to get there?

Break down the steps to ensure clarity and direction.

1. Do we have a plan to get there?
2. How long is it going to take? What is the timeline?
3. Who is in charge?
4. What's the first step?
5. What are the key milestones?
6. What resources are needed?
7. When and how will we communicate progress?
8. Who do we communicate to and in what order?

4. Part – Who plays what roles?

Make it clear how each individual and team contributes to the change.

WHO:

HOW:

- Individuals
- Supervisors
- Managers
- Top Leaders
- Specific Departments
- Vendors
- Customers

Notes:



Other Best Practices

Use Clear, Simple Language

- Avoid **jargon** and **technical** terms
- Keep messages structured **logically** and **easy** to understand
- Provide written summaries for reinforcement

Notes:

Be Transparent & Communicate Frequently

- Share relevant information, even if it's difficult
- Address known concerns directly
- Create a dialogue where employees feel safe to ask questions

How often will you communicate updates, and through what channels (emails, meetings, one-on-ones, etc.)?

- A rule of thumb is to communicate at least 7 times about every major piece of information. Some will get tired of hearing the message, but there will be some people that on the 7th time will swear they've never heard the message before.



Encourage Two-Way Dialogue

Employees should feel heard and supported.

How are you encouraging two-way dialogue?

- Invite feedback through **anonymous surveys, open forums** or **supervisors**
- Actively **listen to feedback**
- Hold regular **Q&A Sessions** to keep employees informed

What are three ways you will create opportunities for employees to ask questions and share concerns?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are some ways to show employees that their feedback is valued?

Acknowledge Uncertainty & Honor the Past

- Be transparent about what's known and unknown
- Recognize past efforts and contributions
- Frame change as a learning process, not a failure

How can you acknowledge past efforts while introducing a new initiative?
