

Communicating During Change

This is a template we use to help leaders build a common story of change – that answers the questions people care about.

Every great communication answers five questions. Sometimes the answers aren't explicit, but always you must address these questions to align people and help them take appropriate action during change.

1. Why change...why now?
2. What happens if we don't?
3. What will change look like?
4. What's in it for me?
5. What's expected? (from leaders...from you).

Example: The subsidiary of an aviation services company was making a transition from supplying their products in a printed form to a software-based, electronic form. Following are their answers to these questions in a 5-minute presentation version.

1. Why change...why now?

We've held a "monopoly" position in our market for 70 years. That's a huge opportunity. Our customers trust us and rely on us to keep them informed. Evolving our products during the next 2-5 years is our responsibility and what our market expects from us.

2. What happens if we don't change?

Increased competition from related industries is cutting into the market share of our leading business division. Our revenues would drop steadily as people shift from paper to electronic versions of our products, supplied by someone else.

3. What will change look like?

80% of our revenues will come from digital platform. This means people, systems and processes will undergo radical changes in the workflow and style. We're going to do our best to bring everyone along, but it's likely to result in some pretty hard conversations and decisions throughout the company in the next 12-18 months.

4. What's in it for me?

Job security won't come from staying the same! If we're going to stay in business, we have to do this. And, your pride in working here is at stake – if you help us make this transition you will always feel a part of it.

5. What can we expect?

From leaders – We will set clear strategy and address the decision-making and accountability issues in the organization that have made it hard to move with speed and flexibility. We will communicate frequently about changes that will have an impact on employee's lives – in a way that is forthright regarding both good news and bad news.

From you – A positive "can-do" mindset that change is needed. A willingness to ask hard questions because we as leaders don't always know what you are thinking. The willingness to take risks to make the business better, knowing they won't always turn out perfectly.

This tool is part of our Communication Strategy process. Check out more details on our website at <http://www.jacksonandschmidt.com/services>