

Employee Communication in Tough Economic Times

Are you worried about your business in tough economic times? You can bet that your employees are.

Nature abhors a vacuum – something always fills the space. The same is true inside your company. In the absence of information about how the company is doing in a down economy, rumor and innuendo will fill the space. It's a safe bet the information is wrong, maybe even harmful to the company.

So, what do you do? You communicate just as you always have, and maybe even more so. Keep these things in mind to make sure you are communicating effectively:

- **Communicate with clarity:** Be as clear as you can be, whether good news or bad. Everybody hears and processes information differently. Take your time to be certain you are getting your precise message out with as little ambiguity as possible and to as many people as you can reach. Everyone will hear soon enough.
- **Communicate honestly:** Communicating honestly builds trust and confidence with your staff, even if you are sharing tough news. Make yourself available for questions from the staff. If you can't answer employee questions for legal reasons, say so and try to explain why.

- **Communicate intelligently:** There are no secrets. Whatever you say internally may end up externally. Remember, as much as you care for each employee, you are still running a business and you shouldn't share information that might end up with a competitor.
- **Communicate respectfully:** Some news should be delivered via email; other news in a company meeting. Importantly, some news should only be delivered face-to-face. Consider the news and the audience. Then, decide.



If you are actually communicating a downsizing within your company, the previous information applies. Here are some additional helpful tips:

- **Communicate separately with those who will be going and staying:** They may need some of the same information, but they will react differently. Be respectful of this fact.
- **Double-check the calendar:** Don't announce a reduction-in-force on "take your children to work day." Your

sincerity and credibility will be called into question, besides looking like a jerk.

- **Express regret, but don't apologize:** No one will believe you, because it isn't true. You are making a very tough but correct call for the company – you're doing what needs to be done.
- **Be proactive:** Have a plan in place that anticipates the reaction of other constituencies when they find out. Whether the media, legislators, vendors, suppliers or key customers, be proactive in sharing information.

Communicating with your employees in tough economic times can be the difference between losing or gaining market share. Whether you consider employees to be your family, your friends or your most valuable asset, or all of the above, treat them as such.

At Vehr Communications, we can help you to develop and implement an employee communications program for good times or bad. Please don't hesitate to contact us. Check out our [Web site](#) to learn more about us.

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