



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Crisis Conversation!

Employees, the greatest asset of an organization, are also the most complex and sensitive to handle. Though they usually are well informed, loyal and positively motivated to help the business succeed, sometimes this is not the case - especially when it comes to being informed.

Employees should be the first line of communication in a crisis situation. Without specific guidance and clarification, employees might be misled by the information that they have about the crisis. This could potentially damage the organization.

The following principles can help in effective communication with employees during a crisis:

Immediate communication. An effective way to manage a crisis would be to communicate it to the employees officially before they learn about it from other sources. Anticipate employee concerns and questions and communicate openly and honestly.

Clearly reinforce the core message. Clearly state what the organization wants to communicate.

Communicate regularly. Keeping employees regularly informed makes them feel valued by the organization. It also gives them the impression that the situation is in control and can be managed.

Differentiate between confidential and non-confidential information. Communicate information that is appropriate, and in case employees want to know about some confidential information, explain why the subject cannot be discussed. It is important to convey to employees that they are trusted and are important to the organization.

Discuss the rationale behind any major decisions. Organizations usually tell employees what has already been decided. By providing them the rationale involved in the decision, employee morale can be maintained.

Be compassionate in communicating sensitive issues. Issues like employee downsizing and plant closure should be communicated with extra care. Employees often remember the way they were treated rather than what they were told.

Provide an opportunity for suggestions and clarification. Use one-on-one, department, group and company-wide meetings, special employee phone lines, intranet bulletin boards, e-mail messages and surveys to allow employees to give suggestions and express their concerns.

Inform all employees at approximately the same time. Releasing news to employees at the same time avoids miscommunication and keeps the message consistent.

Choose an appropriate mode to communicate. Depending upon the message to be communicated, choose the most effective mode - staff meeting, one-on-one meetings or employees newsletter.