

Navigating employee communication during the COVID-19 crisis

As the COVID-19 crisis evolves, internal communication will remain essential, but the focus of communication needs to change. To keep employees informed and engaged, you need to make sure you're meeting their needs.

Here are **three key phases** with advice on how to manage internal communication in each phase:

1. Reacting to the crisis

How are employees feeling?

I'm scared about what is happening.

I'm uncertain about the future.

I'm confused about what to do.

What are your communication objectives?



Keep employees informed about how the organization is responding



Acknowledge emotions



Provide reassurance

How can you meet your objectives? (A few ideas.)

- ✓ **Create a crisis hub:** Central location for up-to-date, accurate information
- ✓ **Address operational issues:** How to work remotely, methods of communication, who is required to be in the office
- ✓ **Leaders:** Frequent updates, visibility, transparent messaging
- ✓ **Managers:** Check in regularly with team members

Transition signs

“Stay at home” orders endure, employees begin to accept situation, business deadlines approach

2. Helping everyone adjust

How are employees feeling?

I'm feeling anxious about whether or not my job is secure.

I'm trying to adjust to this new way of working.

I am eager to get back into a regular routine.

What are your communication objectives?



Keep employees informed about the crisis



Reinforce company strategy, reprioritize as needed



Foster connections/ community

How can you meet your objectives? (A few ideas.)

- ✓ **Leaders:** communicate strategy, including new priorities
- ✓ **Managers:** Clearly lay out expectations for team members
- ✓ **Keep crisis hub** up to date
- ✓ **Leverage collaboration tools:** dedicate space for collaboration, encourage connection through content and events
- ✓ **Use simple measurement techniques** to understand what employees need

Transition signs

Spread of the virus slows dramatically, offices re-open, business picks up

3. Returning to the new normal

How are employees feeling?

I'm so thankful I have a job and a company that cares about me.

I'm excited about the new direction of the organization.

I'm still unsure about how things will work now.

What are your communication objectives?



Ensure employees understand the company strategy and how they contribute



Help employees feel connected to each other



Prepare for next crisis

How can you meet your objectives? (A few ideas.)

- ✓ **Leaders:** re-emphasize strategy, focus on what's new
- ✓ **Managers:** help team members understand how the team will operate differently
- ✓ **Maintain collaboration tools and tactics:** focus on facilitating dialogue between employees
- ✓ **Prioritize information** shared to focus on key initiatives, including wellness programs
- ✓ **Leverage lessons learned** to develop/update crisis communication plans

For more information about communicating during a crisis, please visit:
<https://www.davisandco.com/change-communication/crisis-communication>