

3

THE
GROSSMAN
GROUP

BIGGEST BUSINESS TRENDS IMPACTING COMMUNICATORS NOW ...AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT...



KYLE DIERKING

VICE PRESIDENT, THE GROSSMAN GROUP

THE CHANGE CONTINUES...

ONE THING IS CLEAR ABOUT 2023:

Businesses are continuing to move with the same rapid-fire change that the pandemic brought on—not only because organizations have harnessed it as a capability they want to carry forward, but it's also necessary given the ongoing volatile environment we're living in today.

Communicators by proxy have had to be flexible and adjust to the changing landscape around them. For many, the last few years meant an ongoing crisis-style approach to reaching and engaging the organization—a method that sometimes sacrifices the strategic and structural nature that is foundational to any world-class internal communication function.

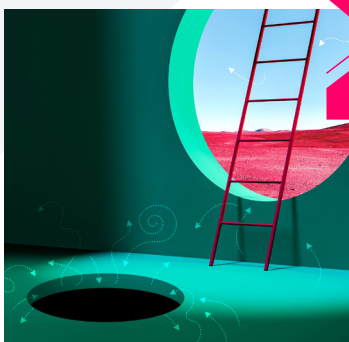
Based on our work and research with clients, one could argue this year could be much of the same, especially when we consider the three biggest business trends impacting communicators today:



1

RISING WAVE OF LAYOFFS

From Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley to Disney and Amazon, many companies are preparing for a challenging economic outlook and are responding to weaker demand for products and services. Restructurings not only put a strain on the people leaving the organization, but also on those who remain as they wonder what's next for them and their career.



2

RAPID EVOLUTION OF ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES

Along with layoffs, organizations are re-evaluating their capital expenditures for the year, meaning they must ruthlessly prioritize what they want to get done in 2023. According to the Wall Street Journal, companies in the S&P 500 are increasing capital spending by only 6% this year—that's compared to a 20% increase in 2022.



3

FUTURE OF WORK

While everyone who could work remotely pretty much did during the pandemic, the pendulum has begun to swing back in the other direction with senior executives wanting employees back in the office. Demand for remote work remains high, but the number of jobs posted on sites like LinkedIn, ZipRecruiter and Indeed.com are reporting a decline in remote listings. At the same time, Gartner predicts that smart organizations will provide more flexibility for the frontline workforce this year, putting a stop to mandating on-site work that can be done remotely.

In the pages ahead, our goal is to turn these trends—
and impending challenges—into opportunities with tried-
and-true practical solutions we've worked with our clients
to implement into their communication functions.



As we continue to
navigate whatever the
new normal is, it's what
we do moving forward
that will prove this year
can be different.

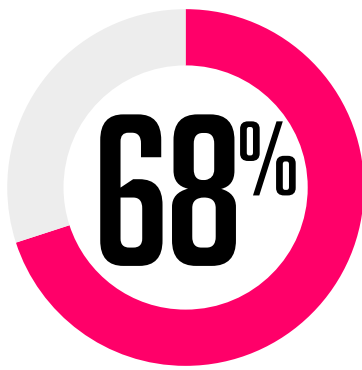
TODAY'S ~~NEW~~ REALITY...



RISING WAVE OF LAYOFFS



During a significant period of change, the role of leadership in communicating and listening, especially the CEO and his or her direct reports, is crucial in driving clarity and building trust.



SAY THE PERCEPTION OF LOW TRUST HURTS THEIR DAILY EFFORT; 58% SAY A LACK OF TRUST AFFECTS THEIR CAREER CHOICES¹

SOLUTION 1

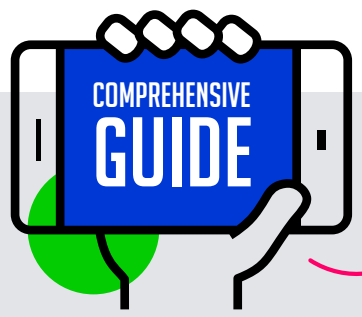
Enabling Leaders to Communicate Authentically and Transparently

📌 Build a communication plan with an ensemble of leadership voices that goes beyond the announcement: Much energy and effort is spent on getting the communication strategy and approach right about the layoff announcement, but the cadence of communication that follows the announcement is equally important. Organizations should put maniacal focus on rebuilding trust, optimism and confidence with employees while painting a picture of what's ahead.


We've learned in recent years that there's great power for leaders in being human in how they lead. We call this approach Heart First Leadership, which we define as championing empathy, humanity and authenticity to build stronger, more trusting


relationships and a thriving, purpose-driven organization. And this approach can—and should—be applied regularly, in both good times and during periods of challenge or change. In the beginning, CEOs are often the right messenger to help set context and the vision for what's ahead, but they shouldn't be the sole messenger. Leveraging leaders such as the Chief Operating Officer (COO), Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) or segment presidents in future communications can lend itself to providing more detail around their given subject matter expertise.

In addition to having the right voices on the right communications, building a consistent drumbeat of communication on progress and learnings within the organization is necessary to keep employees engaged.



[5 Best Practices for Communicating Layoffs to Employees the Right Way >](#)

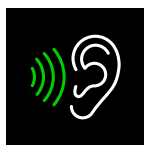
 **Think about how you frame the message:** During periods of change like this, often layoffs are one step in a broader shift of organizational priorities. Given that it's an iterative process, leaders may not have all the answers to questions employees have. That's why communicating in probabilities helps ease some of the tension and demonstrates that you're bringing them along in the journey. Sharing what you know, what you don't know, what you're working on and what you think will probably happen or won't happen helps demonstrate transparent and authentic communication within the organization.


 **Enable leaders throughout the organization to help carry the message:** Beyond the CEO and his or her direct reports, a plan to enable people managers to cascade information to their teams is a simple and effective way to help drive a consistent message from a trusting voice. Resources like leader toolkits delivered on a consistent and predictable basis enable people managers to communicate more effectively with their teams.

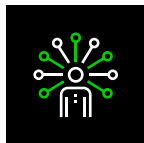



SOLUTION 2

Creating Space for Two-Way Dialogue




 **Hold Listening Sessions:** These small group sessions (with no more than 8-10 people) are open forums for employees to share their perspectives and ask questions to 1-2 members of senior management. It's often good to curate the right list of employees to participate—whether it's high-potential talent, specific people from one section of the organization or business resource groups. This allows employees to feel heard and provide insights to leaders around the pulse of the organization.



 **Host Ask Me Anythings:** These interactive Q&A only sessions with leadership get all the important questions on the table for leaders to answer. Bonus points if you share the recording out afterwards and provide a document with answers to any questions that weren't able to get asked during the session.



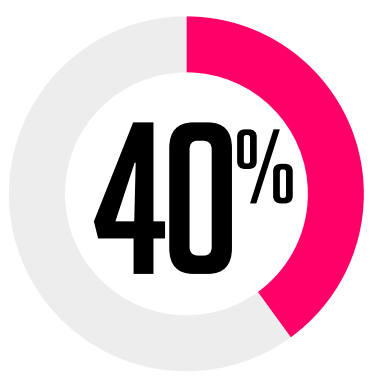
 **Conduct Regular Pulse Surveys:** It's table stakes for most organizations to have an annual employee engagement survey. During times of change, some organizations opt to add in additional surveying so they have a real-time feel for employee engagement. Additionally, having a read on overall communications effectiveness from employees gives the communication function a baseline of what messages are resonating and/or getting cascaded within the organization. The results provide an opportunity to effectively address any communication gaps that exist.

2 RAPID EVOLUTION OF ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES



For businesses, one of their key pandemic learnings was to not only provide more focus to their company priorities, but also have a willingness to be more nimble. That can result in more change more often, meaning organizations need to engage employees differently to be effective.





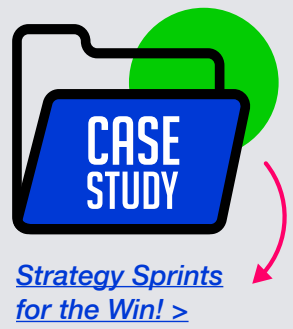
OF EXECUTIVE LEADERS SAY THEIR ENTERPRISE ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEADERSHIP ARE NOT ALIGNED ON STRATEGY EXECUTION¹

SOLUTION 1

Engage leaders and the full organization to create solutions

📌 **Launch Strategy Sprints:** This approach is best when an organization is considering making a substantive shift in organizational priorities—either in the form of a turnaround plan or a new strategy. Strategy Sprints begin with mapping out a plan to pulse stimuli to senior leaders or even the full organization. After each stimulus is shared, there’s a specific set of questions asked where the team developing the strategy needs feedback or ideas. As each new round of stimulus begins, employee feedback is recapped to see where their input is helping inform the shape of the strategy or plan.

This approach ultimately drives greater understanding around the case for change, helps uncover gaps and opportunities and creates greater ownership and buy-in around the path forward.



📌 **Hold Idea Jams:** These small group sessions are great for solving a specific problem. They can be done where multiple small groups work to solve the same problem or a single small group of subject matter experts and cross-functional representation work through how to bring tangible solutions to life. With the right focus, this approach makes employees part of the solution, empowering and engaging them to help solve the organization’s biggest opportunities.

📌 **Host Deep Dives:** Once a strategy or plan is formed, host 30-minute sessions to go deeper on a specific part of the strategy or plan while helping teams work through how they’ll activate it within their remit.

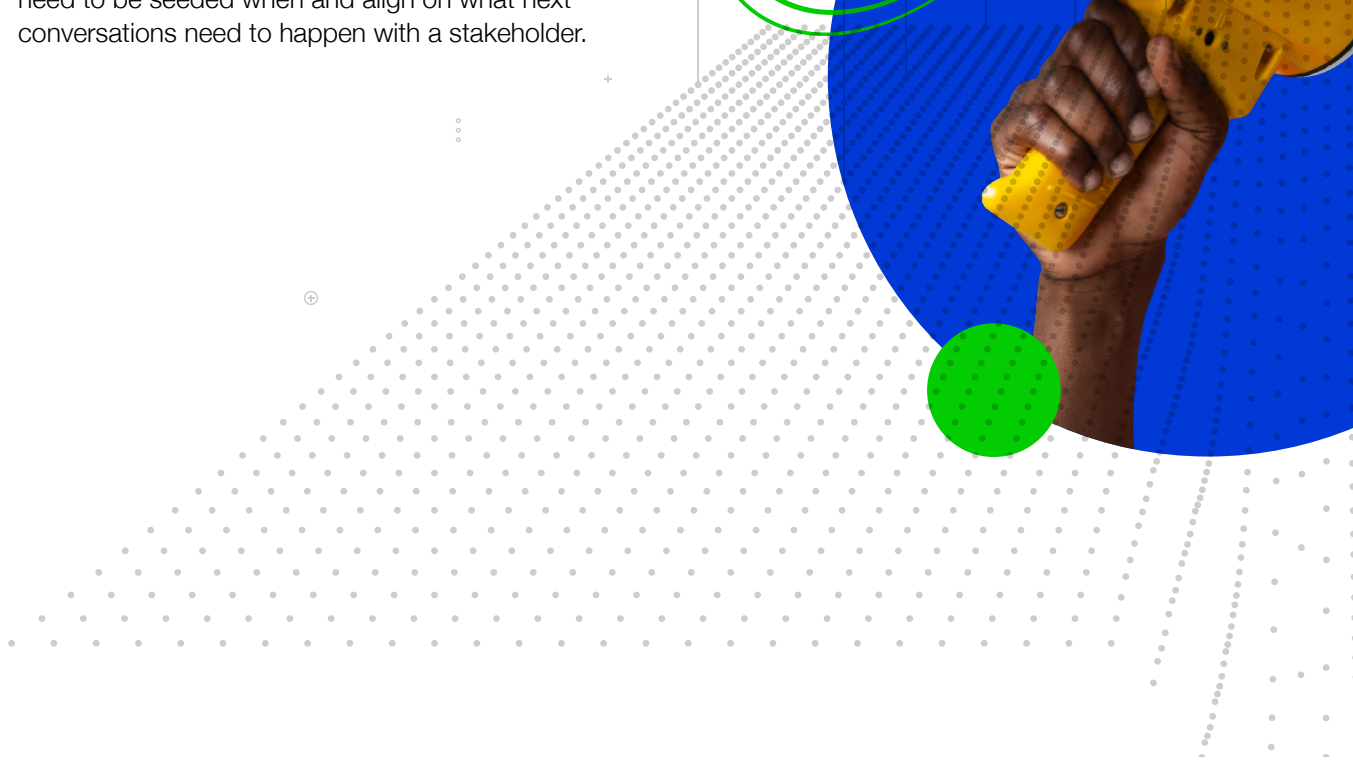
SOLUTION 2

Formalize your approach to stakeholdering

📌 **Think “BIG C”**: For communicators, the idea of stakeholder engagement might be considered a “Little C” communication compared to some of the other “Big C” communication solutions we’ve shared so far. If the goal of your function is to provide the most strategic communication support in service of the success of the business strategy, then this should fall right into a communicators wheelhouse.

Most leaders will tell you that they have regular, ongoing touchpoints with their key counterparts, but sometimes it can become an exercise of checking a box instead of being truly strategic as to what conversations need to happen and when to help move priorities forward.

Communicators can help their leaders formalize the process by having regular check-ins to recap past conversations, determine what messages need to be seeded when and align on what next conversations need to happen with a stakeholder.



FUTURE OF 3 WORK



As the future of work remains very much in flux with a tug-of-war between in-person, hybrid and remote work, now is the time to re-evaluate how employees are being reached and engaged as part of your regular communication processes and routines.





OF PEOPLE WITH DESK JOBS FEEL BURNED OUT AT WORK, AN **INCREASE** FROM MAY 2021; EMPLOYEES WHO ARE DISSATISFIED WITH THEIR LEVEL OF FLEXIBILITY AT WORK ARE **43% MORE LIKELY** TO SAY THEY FEEL BURNED OUT AT WORK THAN THOSE WHO ARE SATISFIED WITH THEIR LEVEL OF FLEXIBILITY.¹

SOLUTION 1

Having a solid communications infrastructure to reach employees

📌 **Evaluate your channel strategy:** During the pandemic, regular channel strategies and routines were either expanded or abandoned altogether. Many benchmarked healthcare organizations indicated that since the pandemic, their communications have, out of necessity been largely reactive, with a primary focus on sharing operational information and less emphasis on “non-essential” business strategy. Most expressed a desire to find greater balance in this area as the pandemic recedes.

In other words, what may have worked in 2019 may no longer be the right solution—for both where the business is at and how employees want to be communicated to. Now is the time to take a step back and decide what’s working well that you want to carry forward while also identifying communication gaps—both how communications are delivered and what content is most critical for your key audiences.



↘ **Retool support levels:** Communication functions took on an incredibly important role of getting real-time communication out to the organization throughout the pandemic. It also meant expanded responsibility, in some cases leading to long hours and burnout along the way.

As the pace of change continues to move fast for organizations, evaluating where communications can provide the most strategic support is key to not only helping the organization be successful, but also the well-being of the communications function. In some instances, it might mean increased levels of support. For other instances, it might mean putting some work back on the business to take care of with input from the communications function, or simply deciding some areas no longer need support.

↘ **Communicate in new and unexpected ways:** While channel strategies and service levels are foundational components of having a successful communication function, thinking about ways to engage the organization differently creates memorable moments (when appropriate) during times of change.

One approach can be to think about the way you consume content in your personal life and apply what you like to your communications. It could be as simple as changing the way you do a town hall to enable two-way dialogue and make it more entertaining and engaging.

SOLUTION 2

Ensure you're reaching deskless workers

↘ **Go mobile first:** In times of change, reaching the deskless worker has never been more important. We've found in our benchmarking work with clients that mobile-optimized communications are key to reaching deskless frontline workers. They come in the form of a mobile-optimized intranet or an app and most workers are willing to voluntarily login and/or download mobile apps on their personal device.

The key with mobile, especially apps, is ensuring there's a strong governance approach around managing the flow of information. In newsfeed-based apps designed for companies, it's important to have information that's easy to find and not overwhelm employees with too much content.

↘ **Segment your communications:** Ensuring there are relevant and more personalized messages—whether it's by work group, role / level, geography or interest—is critical for all audiences, but especially the deskless frontline worker, who generally has less time to view communications. Mobile apps and mass email distribution platforms have built-in tools that make doing this easier. We've found that there's little variance across industries in how organizations segment their audiences.

THE SOLUTIONS PRESENTED TAKE TIME TO ACCOMPLISH. IT REQUIRES FOCUS, ENERGY AND RESOURCES.



As a communication leader or practitioner, that's easier said than done. Think of it as an investment—while the day-to-day work is necessary and “pays the bills,” carving out time to step back and examine your communications function with a strategic lens will pay dividends long-term. It's about building a function that supports the business more effectively, creating more engaging work for the communications team and having an environment that enables better work / life balance.

CELEBRATING
20+
YEARS

OF ENGAGING EMPLOYEES
AND HELPING LEADERS
LEAD WITH HEART

GET SUPPORT FROM EXPERTS WHO HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE.

WE WORK WITH CLIENTS OFTEN TO:

- Navigate and communicate through periods of change— from layoffs and changes in leadership to broader transformation
- Develop and launch organizational or functional strategies in a way that brings leaders and employees along on the journey and engages them in the success of the organization
- Evolve for the future of work, with a focus on optimizing internal communications functions, systems and plans in a way that aligns to organizational priorities
- Think bold and creatively about how they solve their unique business challenges in a way that excites and inspires the organization
- And more

OUR GOAL IS TO MAKE YOU AND YOUR TEAM

SHINE. To learn more about our approach, explore what's possible for your organization or to get started, visit the below resources, or contact us today.



OUR
SERVICES >



THE GROSSMAN
GROUP DIFFERENCE >



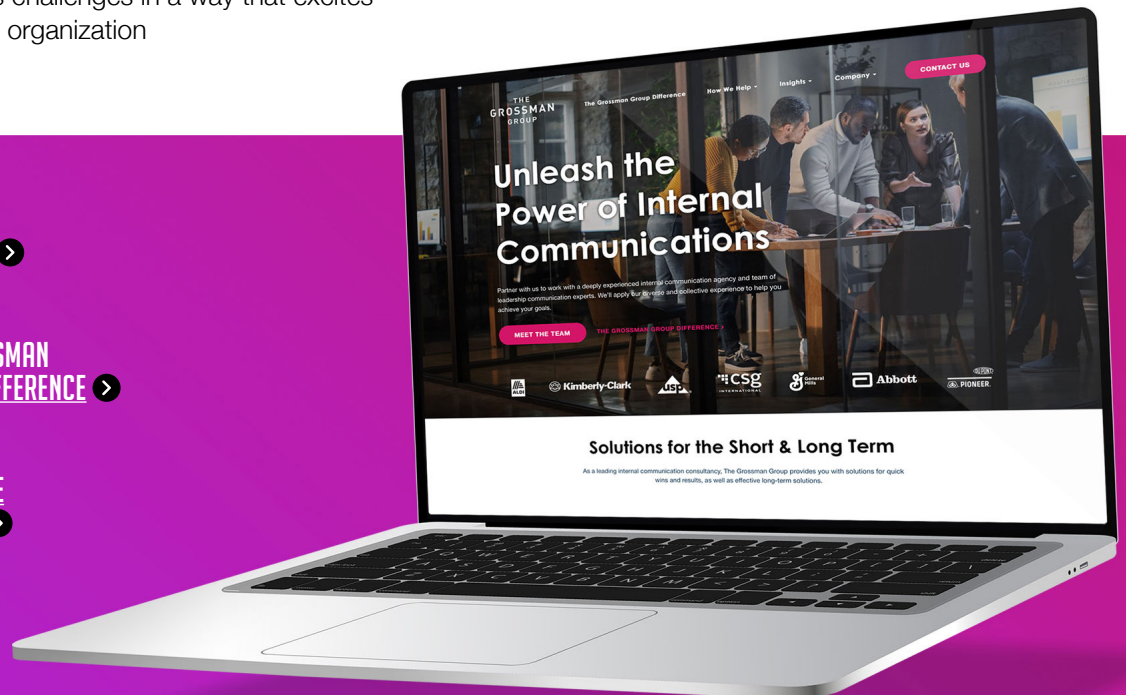
READ CASE
STUDIES >



CONTACT
US >



GIVE US A CALL
312-829-3252 >



THE
GROSSMAN
GROUP



Kyle is a Vice President at The Grossman Group and brings more than a decade of corporate communications experience to the firm, working across a variety of industries and business models. In all his roles, he's been a change agent, strategic counselor and dynamic storyteller. Kyle's current and former clients include Bojangles, DHL, General Mills, Grubhub, Molex, NiSource, Stanley Black & Decker and Tyson Foods, among other leading organizations.

Throughout his career, Kyle has built and implemented successful internal communications programs both in-house and on the agency side, navigating large, complex organizations and tailoring plans to meet the needs of a variety of internal audiences.

He specializes in rolling out communication strategies and messaging platforms to support digital and business transformations, as well as supporting senior executives and developing their annual and initiative-based plans and messaging. He has led the implementation of EVP rollouts, restructuring and key business initiatives to employees and frontline workers, navigating and leading internal communications for business and brand crises, and more.

 **CONNECT WITH KYLE ON [LINKEDIN](#)**

The Grossman Group is proud to be a Certified Diverse Supplier through the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce since 2008.