



THE  
GROSSMAN  
GROUP

# 8 WAYS TO LEAD WITH HEART

IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY AND CHANGE

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# IN THIS UNPRECEDENTED TIME OF SOCIETAL AND ECONOMIC UPHEAVAL, IT'S NATURAL FOR LEADERS TO FEEL POWERLESS AND ANXIOUS ABOUT THE FUTURE.

Many are wondering how their business will survive, what the new normal will look like, and just what the COVID-19 pandemic will mean for their personal and professional lives. However, that sense of powerlessness need not be the prevailing feeling. There are concrete actions all leaders can take to lead and communicate with heart – and guts – during this time of uncertainty and change. That is what this eBook is all about – providing you clear direction to be the very best leader and communicator you can possibly be during this critical time.

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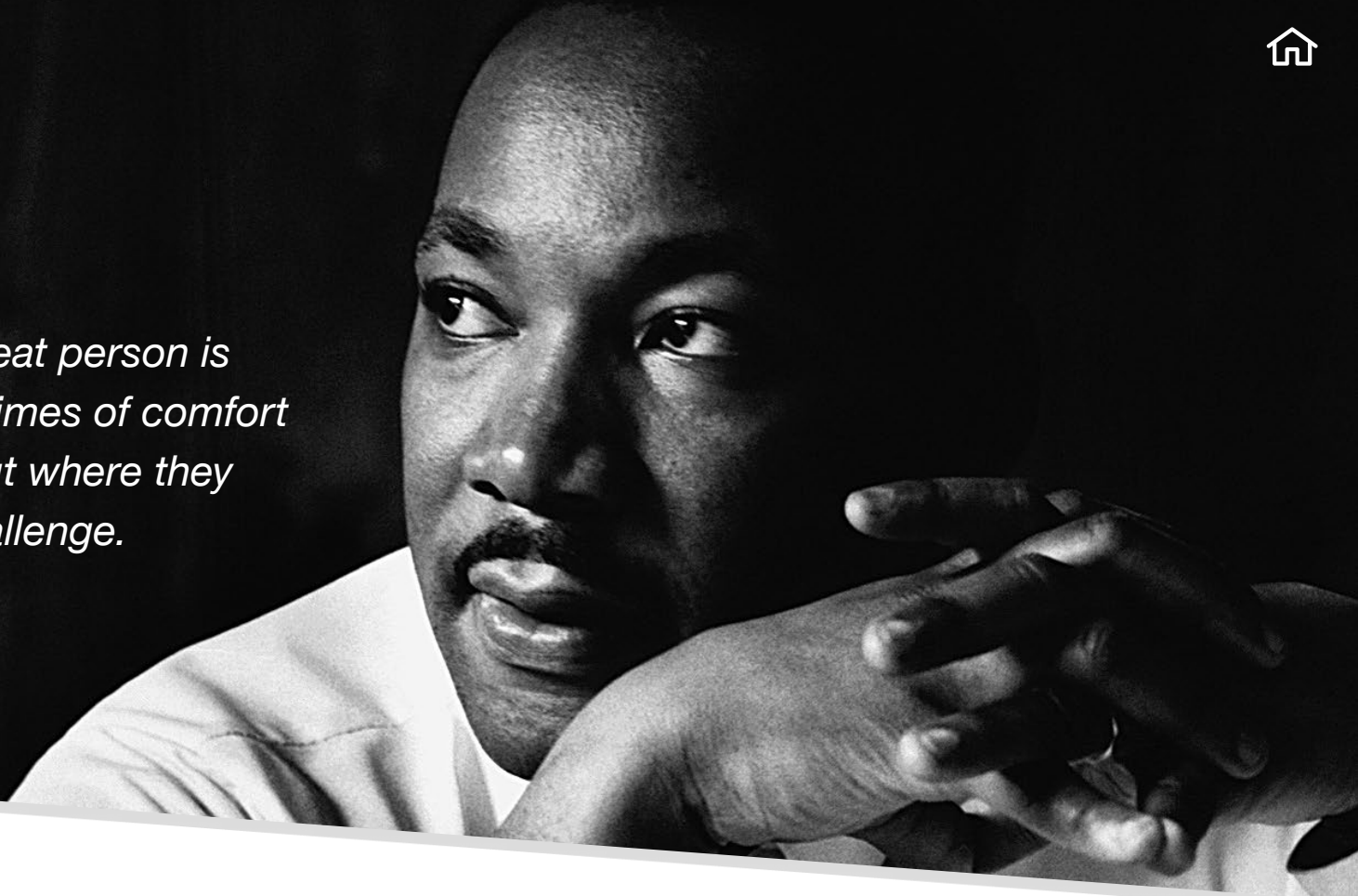


Look for this marker throughout each chapter for inspiring tips and best practices we've received from leaders in our network.



*The measure of a great person is not what they do in times of comfort and convenience, but where they stand at times of challenge.*

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



## LET'S FACE IT:

It's relatively easy to lead when times are good. It takes a lot more courage, heart and grit to lead during tough times. Now more than ever, leaders play a pivotal role in connecting, calming and inspiring their teams. A big part of that is leading with heart.

As a leader, you make the weather. Your emotions have the power to create a stormy day, maybe even a tornado when you project a sense of uncertainty, panic, anger or blame. On the flip side, you have the power to create clear skies and sunny days when you use your emotions for good. This is why the role of the leader is so critical today, and more challenging. Employees are looking for leaders who can move them through the storms with wisdom, grace and heart.

Leaders who lead with heart have some of these key attributes:

- Strong sense of self
- Courage
- Compassion
- Humility
- Caring
- Serving others
- Listening
- Adapting
- Wisdom
- Transparency
- Authenticity

Naturally, leading with heart can be especially challenging for leaders who are constantly under pressure from all different directions, which is clearly the case with COVID-19. But by starting with the first of the "GREAT EIGHT" strategies, you put yourself on the best path to succeed...

# LEAD YOURSELF FIRST

We hear this concept when we're about to take off on a plane. In case of an emergency, flight attendants tell us to put our oxygen masks on first before helping children or others. Leaders need to lead with this same mentality. Addressing your key needs first lets you be more available to those counting on you, whether that's your direct reports, your peers, or others across the organization who need help. Taking care of you at a basic level also helps you not take out stress or frustration on others.



# THIS IS WHERE SELF-AWARENESS COMES INTO PLAY.



Recognize that your emotions may go up and down during an hour, during the day, or during the week, even during one conversation. Just because we're a leader doesn't mean we're immune from the same range of emotions and feelings our teams are going through.

The watchword here is **'gentle.'** How might you be as gentle with yourself as you aspire to be with others? Self-compassion is important because it opens up the capacity for compassion for others.

## Recognize When It's Time to Delay Personal Communication

When you're bothered or feeling low, remember that it's very difficult to communicate, not to mention communicate with heart. You might be irritable, want to blame someone, feel angry or feel like you're worrying excessively. All those feelings are okay, natural in many cases, and give you useful information about how you're doing. Here's the key: *This is just not the ideal time to be communicating.*

## Make Self-Care and Stress Reduction a Leader Priority

To help manage stress levels, some companies are sharing videos or short messages of what leaders or employees are doing to unwind during this crisis – whether it's a manager going out for a run at the end of the day, a leader taking their dog for a walk, or even a favorite meditation app that an employee swears by.

By opening a dialogue about these techniques, leaders make the message clear that it's important for everyone to make self-care a priority, even as they all face unprecedented challenges in the business and in their personal lives.



# KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE AND THEIR NEEDS

There's a lot on employees' minds today, and a good amount of it is concern and fear, especially for those going to a workplace and unable to shelter at home. The principle is this – the more you know about someone, the better you can listen to them, empathize, support, or guide them in the direction you need them to go.



# CHALLENGES EMPLOYEES HAVE FACED UNDER COVID-19

- Fear of contracting the virus and general concerns about protecting personal health as well as the health and safety of family members
- Adjusting to working from home, on-site in the midst of a pandemic, or rotating between the two environments
- Furlough/layoffs
- Questions about job security
- Longer work hours
- Financial concerns
- New ways of working
- Working remotely
- Not being able to work remotely
- Team members out
- Adapting to physical distance
- Operational changes
- Isolation and quarantines
- School closures, new demands to assist in the education of young children
- Not enough medical supplies and health resources
- Not enough sanitary household supplies, including hand sanitizers, toilet paper and masks



In addition to all the many daily concerns, many employees face a barrage of new stresses and pressures and need to adapt to multiple events happening in the same day, week or hour. The level of uncertainty and change in the economy and society is unprecedented in our nation's history. That undoubtedly places a big burden on all employees today.

# THE 8 KEY QUESTIONS

Whether employees actually ask them or not, there are always several key questions on their minds, especially during times of crisis. We call them ***The 8 Key Questions All Employees Have***. These questions are inspired by the famous psychology theory behind human motivation, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. That theory states that people need to fulfill their basic level of needs first before moving to more complex levels of thought or skill. In other words, you can't build a house or write a novel if you're literally starving or haven't slept in weeks. This obviously is true for employees. If they're dealing with a lot of unsatisfied basic needs – the “me-focused” needs – those have to be addressed first before employees can begin to think beyond themselves.



## Common 'Me' Questions in the Age of COVID-19

- Do I have a job?
- Will there be layoffs?
- Will I face a cut in pay?
- Are any of my coworkers positive for COVID-19?
- Will I get sick on the job?
- Does my employer truly care about my health and safety?



## THE 8 KEY QUESTIONS **(CONT.)**

### Moving from 'Me' to 'We'

Once employees feel their questions have at least been addressed, if not completely taken care of, they become more aware of the changes or initiatives happening outside their department or function and can ask the bigger question, "What's going on?" This is a transitional question that helps take employees from "me" to "we." From there, they can begin to feel part of the larger organizational team and work together to accomplish key goals, even in the midst of remaining uncertainty and change. The ultimate payoff is when employees ask, "How can I help?" This is an expression of engagement – a willingness to do more – which also demonstrates a strong emotional connection to the organization.

### Working Through Change

It's important to remember that The 8 Key Questions are questions employees think about, and perhaps ask, every day – whether they are new to the organization or veterans. When change happens, employees immediately go back to the me-focused questions. For example, an employee will naturally go straight back to the me questions when critical things happen inside the company during the pandemic, such as:

- You just found out one of your employees tested positive for the coronavirus
- Your company just furloughed 400 employees, or there's a major change or a decline in production and there's concern that it will impact work hours and/or working conditions

### The Leader's Role

In today's environment, events will naturally trigger employees to go back to the bottom of the pyramid far more often than in the past. Still, it's the leader's job to keep moving employees through the questions and get back to the top of the questions pyramid as quickly as possible. When leaders aren't successful doing that, employees can get caught in what we call the valley of despair. Understandably, in that valley work gets interrupted, slows or even stops.

**All of this means there's a need for much more regular and more personal communications, especially as there's new news, which is just about every day right now. So, who handles what levels of communication?**



#### The Communications Team:

Generally, the communications team through all its vehicles – the Intranet, town halls, all-employee messages and more – can answer the key corporate questions on behalf of the organization, the we-focused questions.



#### Leaders:

Leaders play a major role in answering the me-focused questions. Leaders need to know that this kind of communication is too important to be simply handed over to the communications department. Leaders must help answer the critical questions employees have about their job and how they contribute.

# ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES AND HOW YOU CAN SOLVE FOR THEM

## How to Talk to Teams About a Co-Worker Testing Positive

Leaders today share that one of their biggest ongoing concerns is how to talk to teams about a co-worker testing positive. In these cases, it's obviously important to touch base with legal, HR and communications teams for overall guidance, but here are some big-picture tips:

- Communication needs to happen quickly
- Show respect for employees and caring for employees
- Ensure confidentiality for the affected employee
- Work to not cause panic for the remaining employees who feel especially vulnerable by sharing specific steps you're taking to protect everyone
- Think ahead of time about the best channels you'll use to communicate widely with your teams so everyone gets the message quickly and easily. Keep in mind that many of the tried and true ways of reaching plant and field employees (team huddles on-site) may not be as doable now given social distancing requirements, so work to adapt how you'll provide messages in new ways (voicemails, group calls, Intranet, email, etc.)

## Special Challenges for On-Site Teams During COVID-19

- Greater awareness of risk and to a certain extent, sacrifice
- Heightened sense of alert
- Work disruptions from team members in and out due to self-isolation or quarantine
- Local leaders facing difficult conversations about safety, changes in operations and staffing, or personnel matters related to the virus

## How Do I Fit In?

In addition to The Eight Key Questions, another way to help employees engage in the larger goals of the company is to show them how they fit in. This is really about helping them feel appreciated and valued. Consider the story of the two bricklayers. One is asked what he's building, and he responds that he's building a wall. Another is asked and he responds that he's building a castle. Clearly, the second bricklayer sees the big picture and how he fits in. As a result, he's undoubtedly more motivated every day. Now more than ever, leaders need people to understand the "castle" they are building today.

For instance, consider the employees on the front lines in manufacturing plants, perhaps producing hand sanitizers or N-95 masks. What messages might they need to hear from their leaders during the pandemic? Underlining just how valuable their work is for the overall public health is a much stronger message than simply telling them to do their jobs in order to get paid.



### KEY QUESTION FOR LEADERS:

How can we help our people not just see the task at hand, but the real value and contribution they're making to the organization? When we help employees see their vital role, we help them feel far more appreciated and valued, and more motivated.

# SOLICIT QUESTIONS OF ALL KINDS FROM YOUR TEAMS

## QUESTION...



Employees have lots of questions right now but sometimes need an invitation to raise them out of concern that they may be perceived as negative or overly anxious. Those questions are critically important for leaders to hear so they can get a true pulse for what's on employees' minds.

Recognizing that, many companies are providing additional opportunities for employees to raise their questions and concerns. This can be through a variety of different platforms, such as an anonymous questionnaire, on video chats or team calls, during small group meetings with team leaders, and all other frequently used employee communication platforms. Leaders make a point of embracing these questions...

"I just feel if one person is brave enough to ask the question, there are four or 40 other people with the same question who didn't ask." Many leaders collect the questions anonymously and then share responses on weekly calls or video chats. Another

leader hosts regular "Ask Us Anything" sessions using Pigeonhole (anonymous questions can be voted up so the team answers what's on the most employees' minds). One manager is going out of his way to welcome differing perspectives and

encourage tough questions. "On Skype calls, I've tried to adjust my questioning style to be exception-based. For example, instead of saying, 'Does everyone agree?' I say, 'Does anyone not agree?' This seems to help."

## SHOW YOUR HUMAN SIDE

Understandably, leaders see people reacting very emotionally to these uncertain times. In response, a little care and empathy can go a long way. That involves being present and listening, and finding other ways to show your human side. Of course, there's an inherent challenge to showing the human side when you're not actually meeting people face to face, and quite possibly relying too much on email.

Because of this, leaders need to work extra hard to make meaningful connections that allow them to support and maintain meaningful relationships. Think about the best ways to genuinely connect in other ways – hearing colleagues, having direct and transparent dialogue about what's important, and just doing a lot more listening than you might have in the past.

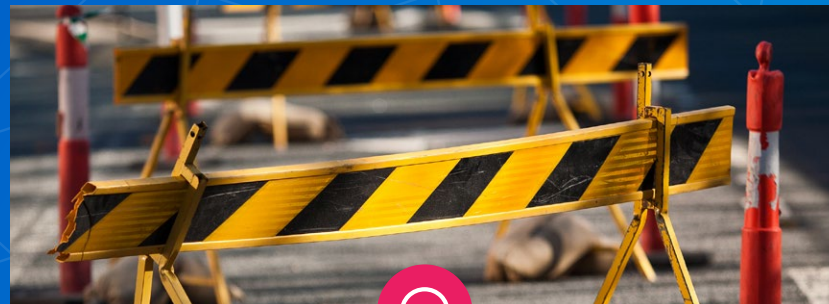




## Empathy

A powerful way to show you care is to help others sort through their feelings and understand them, to show empathy. Empathy is ultimately about putting yourself in someone else's shoes and reflecting genuinely on what they are feeling. Here's just a snapshot of what that accomplishes:

- Helps others understand their own feelings – even the difficult ones – and enables them to reduce the chance of those feelings controlling them.
- Leaders who address the emotional content first help employees move to the more rational and more logical part of their brains.
- Logic leads to greater calmness for everyone and more confidence that leadership is the steady hand at the wheel. For today's anxious employees, that's a huge leadership win.



## Barriers to Effective Listening

Being an effective listener comes with some common barriers that are important to keep in mind. These are some of the main barriers that get in the way of genuinely listening:

1. Thinking more about what you're saying than on what you're hearing.
2. Deciding what you're going to say next before the person you're talking with finishes what they're saying.
3. Putting a higher priority on what you're saying than the person you're talking with.
4. Finally, not working at listening. It's easy to let your mind wander sometimes. It can be hard to stay focused on the conversation, especially when someone else is doing most of the talking, but it's critical if you want to ensure people feel heard.



## Strategies to Be a Better Listener

A great tool for being a better listener is reflective listening, which lets the listener know you're listening and hearing them, and also encourages people to elaborate as they process their thoughts and feelings. Steps to Reflective Listening:



**Actively hear** and understand what others are saying without judgment.

Approach each dialogue with the goal of learning something. Think: "I can learn something from this person."



**Stop talking** and focus closely on the speaker.

Suppress the urge to multitask or focus on what you are going to say next. Be in this moment, not the next.



**Reflect back** the thoughts and feelings you're hearing in your own words.

You don't want to parrot exactly what was said. Rather, repeat the message in your own words, paraphrase, or reflect feelings.



**Remember** that playing back what someone says doesn't necessarily mean you agree.

But, that you hear them, and you understand what they're feeling.

## Examples of Reflective Listening

- After hearing concerns from an employee that a rotation schedule (one week at work, one week at home) is very taxing, play back their message and add: "I hear that the schedule is really challenging for you. And I can tell it's reinforcing your worry about the security of your job."
- Once you address the emotional content (acknowledge the challenge), you might then share what you know right now and don't know, which may offer some assurance, and also feel a little more recognized and understood.
- In the end, the goal is to better understand where someone is coming from, and help them sort through their feelings so they can focus on the meaningful work you need them to accomplish.

## As a Leader, Embrace Honesty and Transparency

Many leaders see the power of being candid and open with their teams during this difficult time, underscoring the fact that everyone is in this together.

Some are spending time talking about what sheltering at home has been like for them and for their families. "I learned a long time ago that people can absorb and react appropriately to bad news if the content and the messenger are credible. Tell the truth. Be consistent. Rely on experts. Deal with facts. It's really not complicated. It starts with doing and saying what's right."

Another leader says: "Be honest with people. Don't just repeat the company line. Share your personal concerns too and look for opportunities to be optimistic." Yet another leader embraces the personal vulnerability piece: "Being attentive to and acknowledging employees' feelings of fear and uncertainty about the pandemic and doing so genuinely will go a long way. You can even be vulnerable about your own apprehension and be calm and provide a reassuring voice."



# COMMUNICATE REGULARLY

In uncertain times, everyone operates in minutes, hours and days, not weeks and months. That requires more frequent communication.



### Best communication cadence and rhythm in times of crisis:

- Big picture: The best leaders already have a regular cadence and rhythm for communicating with key stakeholders.
- A communications cadence is often defined through a communications calendar of regularly scheduled touch points with various audiences that are important to you.
- During uncertain times like this, it's important to add many more additional touch points to that calendar, and you should allow for many more opportunities for dialogue.

### When thinking about your communication calendar and cadence, you'll need to consider how your audiences are working:

- Who is remote?
- Who is on-site (at a plant, hospital, store, in the field, etc.)?
- Who is rotating between the two depending on the day or week?

## TIPS for Communicating with Each Audience

Here are some touch points to consider for each audience:  
*Overall, focus on high-visibility and high-frequency communications...*

Check in daily, if not more often. Make a point to “see” and dialogue with every person on your team. Ensure that you are showing employees that you see them, hear them, and that they matter.



Be “visible” even when teams are remote. Pick up the phone, use MS Teams or other social media platforms to shoot a quick email message, etc.



Hold daily 10-minute huddles on MS Teams/Skype/WebEx so people can see each other and feel connected and go over the game plan for the day. At key times, it is a much more valuable experience to see one another than to be on a conference call.



Hold smaller group meetings with groups that have similar concerns. Think micro so you're giving more people a chance to engage. Instead of a town hall, do a mini-town hall with all people-leaders, or all shift leaders at a manufacturing plant.



Finally, make sure all of your people-leaders have a cadence, too, with the appropriate touch points with their audiences.



# COMMUNICATE MUCH MORE, AND CONSISTENTLY

Many leaders understand the importance of communicating more than they've ever done in the past and building in a regular cadence of outreach to their teams. This can obviously be done in any number of ways that best meet your audience needs, but some of the most popular methods are daily calls, videos or written messages from leaders, lunch chats, or virtual happy hours at the end of the week. The point is simply to ensure employees don't disengage behind anonymous emails. A few examples...



"My team normally eats lunch together in a break room. We have scheduled a lunch online twice a week and we video conference while we eat lunch. I had employees also submit a photo of their home offices and "office colleagues" (pets or kids) and then created a PowerPoint of that, which I shared during the lunch online."



One team hosts small group virtual coffees with their president, "which has been a ray of sunshine/great way for cross-pollination between sites while most people are working remotely."



"Our CEO is writing brief all-employee messages 2-3 times a week, updating about the business side and also providing thanks and encouragement. These are included along with tips/tricks for work/life balance both from outside resources and employees sharing with each other."

# FRAME THE CONTEXT AND MAKE IT RELEVANT

Even as you communicate more, it's very important to provide the context for your communications. This means simply making your messages super relevant to employees. Context is critical because it tells your employees what importance to place on something, what assumptions to draw **(or not)** about what is being communicated, and most importantly, the ultimate meaning to the message.



# 5 Ws AND AN H

One of the best ways to ensure you're providing great context for employees is to tell a complete story, addressing all the key questions. That's where the 5 Ws and an H comes in. Ask any journalist and they will tell you any solid news story covers the following six concepts: What, Why, Where, When, Who

and How. The same is true for communicating inside an organization, especially in uncertain or challenging times. By addressing the 5 Ws and an H, you can ensure you capture important perspective, share the all-important context and make the information relevant for your audience. The principle behind the 5 Ws and

an H is that each question should be answered with the facts necessary in order for the story to be complete. None of these questions can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no." They require context and detail, so the information is meaningful and relevant and answers the main questions on everyone's minds.



## WHAT

What's the decision?

What does it mean?

What should I know?

What's in it for me?



## WHY

Why is it the right decision?

Why now?

Why is it important?



## WHERE

Where is this decision coming from?

Where / what locations will it affect?

Where can I get more information?



## WHEN

When is this happening?



## WHO

Who made the decision?

Who's in charge?

Who does it impact?



## HOW

How was the decision made?

How will it be implemented?

How will communications flow internally and externally?

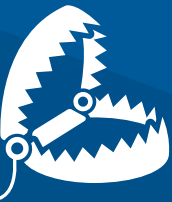
How does it impact me?

# CONTEXT IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Especially during times of change and uncertainty, the context you provide may need to continually fluctuate based on what's happening in the moment, what it means for your company, and what it means for your team.

For example, maybe you're asking manufacturing employees to work longer hours. It's naturally important for them to truly understand the context. Perhaps it's because national hand sanitizer supplies are running dangerously low, increasing the risk of spreading the virus. Or maybe it's because your customer, a national food chain, has a very limited supply of takeout bags and simply can't serve customers without them. This may seem like a simple concept, but one of the biggest mistakes leaders make is they forget to communicate the WHY. Please remember the WHY.

## Context Traps



A regular trap that leaders fall into is assuming that others have the same, up-to-date information that the leader has, so they skip critical details essential to empower their staff. It's like a story where you're on Chapter 13, and your staff are back on the early chapters. It's natural to forget they haven't been privy to the discussions leaders have, and therefore, there's a real need to start at Chapter One with them.

## Relevance / What's in it for Me?

In setting the context for employees, it's important to answer one of the biggest questions always on employees' minds: What's in it for me? Especially in a crisis situation, people have little patience for hearing about topics they don't see as directly meaningful to them, things that may be seen as distracting to getting their work done on deadline or under pressure. Serious times call for focus on serious issues. As a leader, you need to filter out what really doesn't matter today and focus on what does.

## Let Go of Any Need for Approval

When communicating in a time of uncertainty or change, the goal isn't that everyone is going to like the decisions you make as a leader. They simply aren't always going to like what's happening inside the organization or in the world, no matter what you say or how you say it. As leaders, we can't change the reality. But we can help people understand and grow to accept it. Here are some tips for helping employees reach that level of understanding and acceptance:

- Fully explain the rationale behind the decisions we communicate.
- Discuss a value or principle that guided the decision. For example, your desire to keep people safe, ensure the long-term health of the business, be as equitable as possible to everyone, protect the community, etc.

# FOCUS ON THE “WHY”

The well-known business strategist and author Simon Sinek has a critically acclaimed book called *Start with Why*. It resonated with leaders because he emphasizes focusing on the big picture, the true reason why a company is in business and its purpose in the world.

The same philosophy can be applied to communication in these challenging times, with leaders helping their teams know why certain decisions are being made so teams have full context and understanding. Many leaders have this concept top of mind as they communicate today. A few snapshots of perspectives from different leaders...



“We connect any communication now with the why – and with our vision – and we try to make ourselves aware of this before any task, meeting, email, or call.”



“We’re focusing on short, bullet-pointed, well thought out emails. Stay focused, don’t share the stuff that doesn’t matter right now.”



“Don’t confuse those trying to get their jobs done with information that does not pertain to their mission. Understand your audience and what is important to them and their mission.”

# TALK OPENLY ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING

What do most employees really want in times of change? Answers to these three points:

- **What** their leaders know and **when** they know it
- What their leaders **don't** know
- Information presented in a **truthful** way



# HOW TO COMMUNICATE IN TIMES OF CHANGE

It can be frustrating for leaders to recognize that they don't have all the answers they need. It makes you feel like things are just happening to you, and that nothing is truly in your control. But you can take comfort in the fact that employees don't expect you to have all the answers. In

fact, they probably wouldn't trust you if you said you had all the answers! Instead, employees just want to know what you do know and when you know it (without unnecessary delays in relaying the communication). And, they want you to share in a truthful, authentic way. Think of it as 3 + 1...



HERE'S  
WHAT WE  
**KNOW**



HERE'S  
WHAT WE  
**DON'T  
KNOW**



HERE'S  
WHAT WE'RE  
WORKING ON  
**FINDING  
OUT**

3

+

1



PROACTIVELY  
**BUST  
MYTHS**

For example, you might say:  
*"I want to address something  
I heard that's not true"* –  
and then share exactly what  
it is you know / don't know.  
Busting myths is a critical  
step that leaders must do  
proactively, but often miss.

**DOWNLOAD**

EXPANDED  
(AND EDITABLE)  
TEMPLATE IN  
WORD FOR FREE

# COMMUNICATE IN TIMES OF CHANGE TOOL

Aptly named ***Communicate in Times of Change*** – our four-quadrant grid helps you plan your communication and outlines the key points to discuss with any audience:



## WHAT YOU KNOW

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## WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

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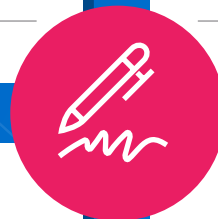
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## WHAT YOU'RE WORKING ON FINDING OUT

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## MYTHS TO PROACTIVELY BUST

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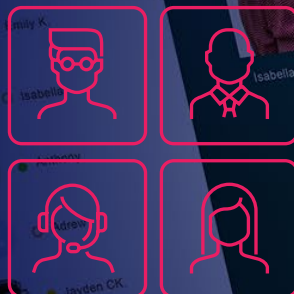
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# TALK OPENLY AND CELEBRATE WINS

Keeping employees continually informed of what's going on inside the company has never been more critical, yet there's also a great opportunity inside those regular conversations to recognize the hard work that's being done and celebrate the wins. This helps not only with communication, but with morale. Many companies have made a special point of recognition during their more frequent check ins. A few examples...



“Very little in our field service and customer facing roles is business as usual ... and that's been a key part of all our communications. We start and end with these recognitions.”



“As a morale building exercise, I sent small drop-ship gifts to everyone on my team as an ‘isolation surprise,’ and those seem to have been received well.”

# BE RESPECTFULLY AUTHENTIC

While it's critically important to communicate with all "GREAT EI8HT" strategies outlined here, there's a key factor that makes all communication even more powerful and effective, a sort of "it" factor that all great communicators have. I sum that special factor up as ***respectful authenticity***.

Authenticity isn't a skill. Instead, it's a component that anyone can work on to become better, whether it's on the job, in your relationships, or at home to lead a more fulfilling life. Authenticity truly is a form of communication. When you come at communication from an authentic place, communication becomes much easier and far more effective for your teams.



# THREE KEY COMPONENTS TO RESPECTFUL AUTHENTICITY

## 1. Know Yourself

Leading authentically is about knowing yourself and embracing who you are. People's radars are up for what's not authentic and real, and any audience is far more likely to believe and trust you if you're being yourself. You can certainly "try on" strategies that work for others but in the end, leading authentically is about finding what works best for you—a personal communications cadence, an overall leadership style and approach, a basic communication philosophy that's uniquely yours. No matter the style, when you are genuine, you have "full power," which is what the Greek root of authentic—*authentikos*—truly means.

## 2. Be Your Best Self

This means rising to the occasion – as so many people are doing today – to act in ways that are consistent with who you are and what you value. It's also about behaving in ways that are in sync with your values instead of trying to please others or tell others what you think they want to hear.

## 3. Have Quiet Courage

Being authentic requires leaders to embrace the core truth of any situation, at first on a personal level and then with others. Naturally, this requires courage – the courage to say things that need to be said but to do it in a kind and respectful way. Remember, the best leaders don't just share any small thing that they think or feel all the time. That's going to be damaging to you personally or to the company. In other words, being authentic doesn't give you license to be an SOB. We all know how frustrating it is to confront leaders who have a sort of "This is me – like it or not" attitude or those who say, "I'm mad and am entitled to yell at people." Being angry is not the same thing as acknowledging you're angry and finding an effective way to communicate that out of respect for the person or situation you're angry about.

Authentic leaders strive to communicate with heart, compassion and caring. They value serving others, and with transparency. They are not focusing solely on themselves, and they are careful not to take authenticity too far. That's an important distinction during these emotional times. Becoming an authentic leader also requires reflection. It's important to carefully consider what the audience can take in and understand on any particular day. Giving someone information without the context that helps them understand and act on it can just create confusion and anxiety. In other words, you have to be playful and purposeful so you can respond in a more grounded and effective way.

**DOWNLOAD** OUR FULL EBOOK  
ON RESPECTFUL AUTHENTICITY HERE



# MAKING IT OKAY TO BE REAL

Especially given the stress that so many employees are under today, it's important for leaders to be unafraid of being candid and authentic. Sometimes those messages are about the business – honest conversations about challenges and needs. But it's also a good practice to be candid and authentic on a personal level too.

Many leaders are having more open conversations with team members, either by calling them directly or inviting teams to share a bit about their lives before immediately discussing business concerns on calls. Others are holding calls, happy hours and coffee chats where the conversations are entirely personal, with both the leaders and employees sharing what's on their minds. Here's some snapshots...



"I'm reminding others that I'm always available to them and I live up to it."



"Clarity and transparency are even more important than prior to this crisis so just be authentic. I have had team members get frustrated, saying they really don't understand what to do. Adjusting our communication styles based on how they listen and what they need to know is helpful."



"I'm a leader who doesn't normally share much about my personal life, but I've done more of that lately. I've told employees about a worry I had that my spouse might have the virus. She's been showing many of the symptoms, but she isn't sick enough to be tested. By doing so, I've made myself a little vulnerable, and I think my teams appreciate that candor and personal honesty."

## BE READY TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

The last of the GREAT EI8HT strategies is to be ready to answer questions and do it in a way that creates dialogue and leads to understanding. We have three tips to help you do this well...



1

**PREPARE  
yourself**

Be ready for the questions you're most likely going to get (and those you dread most).

That means thinking about:

- What is on people's minds?
- What's the toughest questions you're likely to get – and how will you respond to them?

2

**PRACTICE – out loud – to answer the questions that are likely to be the toughest.**

Remember to use these techniques:

- Think about the perspective your employees will bring to the discussion.
- Demonstrate empathy as you answer questions.
- Be respectfully authentic.
- Employ the 3 + 1 communications approach:
  - What we know...
  - What we don't know...
  - What we're working on finding out...

3

**BRIDGE**

Bridging helps you get back on track if questions are starting to pull you down a path that isn't helpful, or distracts you from the key points you're trying to get across.

Key steps for bridging:

- Address the question being asked, but don't stop there.
- Use key words or phrases as a bridge to get back to a key point you want to make.

**REMEMBER**

You can't just ignore a question you don't like. You need to address it, even if it is just to say that you don't have the answer at this time. You can bridge to a key message by using some phrases like these:

- "However, ..."
- "Something else that may be of interest..."
- "I can't speculate on that but what I can tell you is..."
- "What you should know is..."
- "The most important question we should all be asking is..."
- "Before we go too far down that path, let me add..."



**EMPLOYEE QUESTION:** "Is the date for returning to work going to be delayed beyond what the company originally announced?"

**LEADER RESPONSE:** "I don't know the answer to that right now. But what I can tell you is that our decisions on timing for getting people back in the office will be driven by our ability to have a safe working environment and guidance from state and local governments."

# FIND THE TRUTH TELLERS

Taking more questions from employees and thinking more deeply about what may be on employees' minds is always a leader best practice. But one thing that many leaders don't do is make a real point of finding those employees inside or outside the management team who will be consistently brave enough to share honest assessments of your leadership style and approach during this crisis. The most courageous – **and effective** – leaders will identify that group of people, then regularly check in with them. Your key ask of these folks is this:

*“What am I doing well today and what could I do even better?”*

# HERE'S TO CLEARER SKIES AHEAD

As you go out and continue to lead in this challenging time, please remember these important summary points:

1

Think about your audience. Remember the *8 Key Questions* and why they matter now more than ever before.

2

Listen to and connect with your people.

3

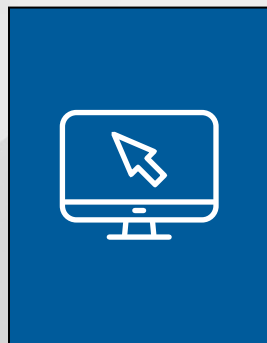
Continually refer back to and revise your communications calendar and the cadence of your communications as you move through this crisis. It's almost impossible to overcommunicate right now as situations and facts – and some of the decisions they drive – change daily, if not hourly.

And of course, if you're ever unsure what to do, look yourself in the mirror and ask: What would be the best version of myself during this time? And then trust your heart.

Now you have the **GREAT EI8HT** key strategies to consider for leading even more effectively with heart. Below, you'll also find links to other resources and helpful information, including a 60-minute on-demand webinar which expands on these topics.



**WEBINAR  
ON DEMAND**



**COVID-19  
COMMUNICATION  
RESOURCE PAGE**



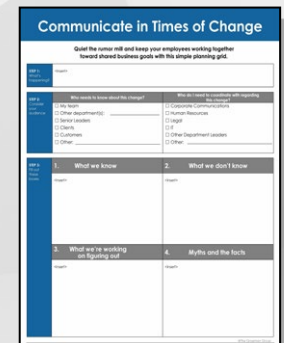
**GREAT EI8HT  
ONE PAGER**



**BEST  
PRACTICE  
GUIDE**







**COMMUNICATE  
IN TIMES OF  
CHANGE TOOL**





# DOWNLOAD THE FULL WEBINAR

## LEARN HOW TO:

-  Show your human side and listen with empathy and caring
-  Frame the context for the current situation and make it relevant for your team
-  Be ready to answer questions, especially the tough ones
-  And more

## LET'S CONNECT

  
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# DAVID GROSSMAN, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA, CSP

David helps leaders drive productivity and get the results they want through authentic and courageous leadership and communication. He's a sought-after speaker and advisor to Fortune 500 leaders, and three-time author. His latest book, "No Cape Needed: The Simplest, Smartest, Fastest Steps to Improve How You Communicate By Leaps and Bounds," recently won the Pinnacle Book Award for the "Best in Business" category and the Beverly Hills

International Book Award's President's award. His other books include, "You Can't NOT Communicate: Proven Communication Solutions That Power the Fortune 100," now in its second edition, and its follow up, "You Can't NOT Communicate 2". His leader**communicator** blog is also ranked the #1 blog on communication by Feedspot for the third year in a row. David counsels leaders at top organizations to unleash the power of strategic internal communication

and drive performance. Clients include Abbott, Astellas Pharma, CVS Health, Health Quest, Hillrom, Johnson & Johnson, Kimberly-Clark, Lockheed Martin, McDonald's, NYU Langone Health, Sage Therapeutics, U.S. Pharmacopeia and Wyndham, among others. He's Founder and CEO of The Grossman Group, an award-winning Chicago-based strategic leadership development and internal communications consultancy, and teaches at Columbia University in NYC.

David has been featured in:

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



NIGHTLY NEWS



Chicago Tribune

FAST COMPANY

Los Angeles Times

If you're looking to elevate how your leaders lead with heart and get results during these times of significant change and uncertainty, we can help. These are just some of the ways we're supporting leaders today:

- Develop strategies and plans to keep employees informed, connected and inspired
- Conduct leader communication trainings to help leaders engage their employees, whether they are on-site or remote
- Coach leaders to be even more effective during these uncertain times
- Provide tactical implementation writing and communication support
- And more



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