

Communications Guide for Ever-Changing Times

The unexpected is always happening, and when employees and employers encounter change and challenges, they reach out to their HR administrators for answers and guidance. Managing a constantly changing world starts with communication, continues with communication, and ends with communication. HR administrators know employees have the potential to create their own unreliable story if the company story isn't told and conveyed story well. This guide provides a starting point to craft your company's messaging and best practice tips for how to share information.

Strengthen with Knowledge: What to Research

Use a trusted source when referencing or communicating real-time information and best practices.

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
» www.cdc.gov
- World Health Organization (WHO)
» www.who.int
- Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM)
» www.shrm.org
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
» www.eeoc.gov
- United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division (ADA)
» www.ada.gov
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
» www.osha.gov
- U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)
» www.dol.gov
- Harvard Business Review (HBR)
» <https://hbr.org>
- National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI)
» www.nami.org

Recognize resources and information vary by region, state and city.

- Become champions of an associate's community. What area-specific information should be shared? What information would be useful to the associate's community and easily shared? Think: school closings, drive-thru testing locations, local delivery services.

Know the location of associates and work to meet their basic needs.

- By meeting basic human needs, such as food and shelter, associates will be better equipped to then tackle critical business at hand like financial hurdles or deadline intensive projects.

Understand what's covered.

- Reach out to partners across different carriers to determine what health and wellness coverage is available for associates in different states.
- Determine the expected costs of copay, testing, prescriptions, and services to the employee and employer. What temporary coverage changes are possible to meet the current challenges?
- Consider the whole person so you can take their entire life into account. Moments of uncertainty impact all areas of an associate's life. Are there resources available to help with child, pet and elderly care, or short-term loans to cover unexpected health costs or partner unemployment?
- Which existing benefits would be particularly helpful at different moments in time, and how should they be highlighted? Think: telehealth, virtual doctor visits, grocery and pharmacy delivery, financial wellness, identity theft protection.

Use employee feedback.

- Listening to employees will challenge established assumptions, which will create more opportunities to better support and provide them with the information and resources they need.

Answer the Call for Help: How to Communicate and Educate Effectively

Set up a single resource page.

- Frequent long emails are overwhelming and difficult to digest at any time but especially during heightened periods of stress. Instead, create a one-stop spot for everything they may need (Google Docs, Confluence, Teams Page) where information and resources are updated regularly.
- Consider creating resource buckets for associates, associates communicating to customers, and curated state information.

Develop a regular cadence and format.

- It's easier to understand and navigate information when it is delivered consistently. Remember to take the pulse of how much is enough and when it turns into too much.
- Proactively reach out during times of uncertainty. There can be comfort in predictability.
- Communicate regularly with a short email. Example format:
 - State intention.
 - Note any new additions made to the single resource page.
 - Remind associates of what resources are available and how to navigate them on the page.

Be intentional in every communication.

- Start every communication with an intent to be clear and purposeful with what you want to say.
- In uncertain times, it is important to reiterate that the intention of the communication and resources shared is to make sure all associates are safe and can support themselves and their families. Once this intention is established, HR and leadership can then move forward to discuss how best they and the company can help their clients and customers.

Use a variety of channels.

- Everyone digests information differently, and often the same information becomes stale if delivered in the same way. Consider using emails, texts, and push notifications that reach people at the moments that matter most.
- Videos and webinars are often a great way to get a lot of information across in a short time.

Always close the loop.

- Provide a way for associates to ask questions and receive a quick response.
- Consider setting up an email group, private Slack channel, or in-platform chat that is monitored by HR admins to help field questions and concerns.

