

Creating Commitment to Action: Communicating Change Principles

- Three separate yet interconnected types of information must be clearly communicated, in the following order: **Strategy** (why change? where are we going?); **Change** (who is doing what, when, how?); and finally, **Transition** (information to help everyone adapt).
- **Senior leaders** shape the strategy, own the changes and set the stage for transition. They are responsible for ensuring these messages are engaged consistently throughout the organization.
- **Direct supervisors** are the most trusted source of information for the majority of people in the organization. **Project teams** have the up-to-date change details. **Senior leaders** must engage all levels of leadership with an emphasis on connecting direct supervisors and project teams.
- Determining where people are vs. where they need to be in terms of **awareness, understanding, commitment and action** is essential when developing plans for communicating change.
- Technology based communication is fine for informing or building awareness. **Face to face dialog** is essential to ensure understanding and create commitment to action. Face to face dialog is engaged, two-way communications where most of the time is spent on thoroughly discussing questions, issues and concerns.
- **One-page briefing notes** are the best communication tool to make complex information understandable and to ensure everyone gets on the “same page.” Metaphors, analogies, and examples help simplify complex information. It is essential that one-page briefing notes be created with input from the senior leader and project team.
- Remember the basics: **Actions** speak louder than words; **listening** is twice as important as talking; and tell people the **truth**. People can always handle the truth. What they can't handle is uncertainty.
- The **role of the communication expert** is to support and assist all leaders to be effective communicators.
- Creating commitment to action involves **communicating what you know at the time**, in as many ways as it takes for people to *get it*. Repetition creates conviction.
- Understanding **why change is needed** and **how it impacts the individual in his/her terms** are essential messages that are best understood through dialog with individuals and their direct supervisors.