

COMMUNICATING IN THE NEW WORLD OF WORK: 4 WAYS WE CAN DO IT!

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Alright folks, we've been at this for a solid 2 months now, and it's becoming clear that it's time to shift our thinking. For the first several weeks of this crisis, many of us thought about it in terms of BEFORE and AFTER – there were all the ways we worked BEFORE COVID-19 arrived, and for a while we felt certain we'd be able to return to those ways AFTER it's all over.

We're all beginning to realize that the world of work will NEVER be the same. Remote work – in some form – is almost certainly here to stay. The ways that leaders communicate with employees, employees connect with each other, and managers lead their teams will NEVER be the same. So, rather than simply managing our way through this crisis, it's time to **pivot** and ask ourselves: **How are we going to communicate in this new world of work?**

For many of us, the thought is scary and overwhelming. It's completely uncharted territory – there are no past examples we can look at for guidance. You may even be asking yourself: "Can I do this?!?"

Well, I'm here to tell you that you absolutely can. Because much of what you've been doing during this period, and even the things you've been doing prior to COVID-19, are still the most effective and important. Yes, it's scary and vastly different. But we have the tools and skills to do it.



1 MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

Depending on the nature of your business, you may have most of your people working from home, while others are risking their health to continue working on site. For some companies, the gaps in their communications channels showed up quickly. You may have had to scramble to roll out new channels to reach audiences, with little time to consider things like your strategy, processes, governance...or even tailoring your messages to ensure they resonate.

As you shift into a longer-term mindset, **take a step back** and think about your channel maps and audience strategies today. How effective are they in these new circumstances? Not sure? Now is an excellent time to do some employee research. Talk to your people (or **survey** them) to take stock of how they're feeling, what they want to hear, and how they want to receive information.

2 KEEP YOUR SENIOR LEADERS FRONT AND CENTER

If ever there was a defining moment for company leaders, THIS is that moment. Employees need leaders who are calm, strong and empathetic, and the **data** is showing that by and large, CEOs have been doing an excellent job.

The internet is now overflowing with **celebrations** of CEOs who have shown vulnerability in their communications. That kind of people-centric leadership should have ALWAYS been the norm.

Hopefully your leaders have risen to the challenge, and when this pandemic does eventually pass, it will be your responsibility to keep them there – a transparent and relatable communications approach doesn't end when this pandemic does. And if your leader hasn't risen to the challenge yet, you have a clear mandate to help them get there.

3 CONTINUE COLLABORATING

This time of crisis has required a level of collaboration and down-right scrappiness from all of the teams and functions involved in keeping employees connected and engaged. From Internal Communications and

HR to Legal and IT, teams have had to work together and deliver solutions faster than ever before. Suddenly, barriers that slowed down progress in the past fell away.

We've seen HR teams relying on their colleagues in communications to help them use tried-and-true digital channels to reach employees; IT teams clearing the way for rapid deployment of new collaboration tools; HR and legal teams partnering to create policies that support and protect employees facing unprecedented personal challenges. And unsurprisingly, when these teams work together, the solutions are better than ever.

Who ever imagined companies could effectively attract, hire and **welcome** new employees in this environment? Who could have predicted how quickly communicators could innovate in such a high-stakes situation? It's clear that together we're better, and I hope that collaborative and fast-moving way of working is here to stay.

4 REINFORCE YOUR CULTURE

Just a few weeks ago, we published a **white paper** all about the importance of defining and memorializing your company's culture, and in it, we defined this very vague term, culture, as "the glue that holds the company together." In the midst of all this change, fear and uncertainty, what's holding your people together?

It has NEVER been easy to extend the cultural experiences of employees working at a central HQ to those working in remote locations. Now, we all have to rise to the challenge of helping employees feel connected by a **common culture** no matter where they are or how they're working. Many companies are **finding ways** to stay true to those things that have always been core to the culture.

But nothing – NOTHING – will convey your culture as much as the WAY you treat your people. How your company treats employees during this difficult period will affect their sentiments for YEARS to come. Culture always matters, but it matters now more than ever.

BOTTOM LINE

We CAN do this. We have the skills and tools to help our organizations thrive, and most importantly, we have each other. Please **get in touch** if there are any ways we can help, and be sure to check out our **COVID-19 Resource Center** for more insights and tools.

For regular doses of bite-sized brilliance, be sure to subscribe to our monthly newsletter, **the Inkwell**, and follow us on **LinkedIn** and **Twitter**.



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