

FLM / HARVEST

CHANGE COMMUNICATIONS:

OPENNESS + CONSISTENCY + CONCERN

Change is constant, and companies are experiencing more and faster change than ever before. Mergers, acquisitions, restructuring and staff reductions are just a few of the situations corporate communications professionals are facing today. Communicating change to audiences, including employees, customers and other stakeholders, is an essential element to a successful outcome.



INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CHANGE COMMUNICATIONS: WORKING TOGETHER

Internal communications isn't the entirety of the change communications picture, but we believe it is or should be the place to start.

It can be a natural reaction for a company to want to begin by developing change messages for an external audience. But internal audiences, who will go on to communicate any company news externally, must be the first to learn of significant changes.

There are nuances when talking with each key audience: employees, shareholders, vendors and the media. By starting with internal messaging, a company has the advantage of pressure testing the authenticity of its story with the very people who often have the most at stake.

AN INTERNAL CHANGE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY MUST:

- ✓ **BE OPEN AND HONEST.**
Clearly explain what's changing, why it's changing and a timeline for implementation.
- ✓ **ACKNOWLEDGE THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF THE CHANGE.**
It's natural for people to be concerned about their own future. Showing empathy and clearly communicating the impact on employees and other stakeholders – the “what's in it for me” – will go a long way toward staving off unproductive speculation and worry.
- ✓ **INITIATE TWO-WAY COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS.**
Give employees an outlet to voice their concerns and a way for management to dispel the inevitable rumors.
- ✓ **EXPLAIN CLEARLY WHAT EMPLOYEES ARE TO DO OR NOT DO.**
For some, the change may be significant while others will be minimally affected. Let people know what's expected of them, even if it's business as usual.

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FLM Harvest's change management experts bring experience crafting successful strategies and plans for companies, large and small. Like all of our communications projects, the first step the FLM Harvest team recommends is being grounded in truth.

This includes soliciting input from trusted employees from all levels of the organization – not just the executive floor – and from all departments and backgrounds. A company whose culture values input from employees will be far ahead of the company with a top-down approach when it comes to adoption.

Similarly, the company whose internal communications strategy prioritizes regular, thoughtful and timely communications with its employees and stakeholders will weather change much more successfully than the company that communicates infrequently, inconsistently or not at all.

“IN TIMES OF BUSINESS CHANGE, STAKES ARE HIGH. DON'T LET THE RUMOR MILL HAVE THE UPPER HAND.”

The FLM Harvest team can ensure your internal listening and communications strategies and channels are appropriate and ready.

We can develop the key messages that articulate the “why” and the long-term benefit to employees, customers and stakeholders. Last but not least, we can help anticipate questions and prepare spokespersons to answer what employees, customers or the media want to know.

Change may be inevitable, but it doesn't have to be catastrophic for an organization. A well planned and executed change communications strategy can result in an outcome that benefits all concerned.

FLM Harvest is a strategic consulting, marketing and communications agency that helps set strategy, align teams, frame opinions and create demand for clients in agriculture, food and rural lifestyle markets.

Is your organization navigating a big change or challenge? Our experienced public relations and reputation management team will guide you every step of the way.

For more information on FLM Harvest public relations, go to flmharvest.com. To contact our PR pros, email us at info@flmharvest.com.



HEIDI NELSON
Executive Vice President

Heidi knows about change and the impact of reputation on enterprise value. Having guided communications strategy for numerous organizations through business change and challenges, from acquisitions and leadership changes to safety incidents and lawsuits, all while building and selling her own award-winning public relations firm, Heidi brings proven experience in high-stakes communications with stakeholders.