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# Getting In 2 HR

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8 ways to  
'Communicate through  
a crisis'  
In 2 HR Viewpoint

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Employees could be forgiven for being a little distracted and concerned right now by everything that is going on in the world. They have worries about whether their jobs are safe, what will happen to the company and what will life be like when we come out of this recession, etc.

These difficult times however, do give good managers the opportunity to show their leadership skills. Ok so you may not be able to answer all of the questions you are being asked by staff but you do have a vital role to play in inspiring confidence and encouraging them to focus on areas that will strengthen the business and secure its, and their, future.

## 8 ways to 'Communicate through a crisis'



### 1. Provide information

During a downturn managers are often uncertain of the future, do not know what to say to staff, and so end up saying nothing. However, it is important that you keep talking to your employees, tell them what information you have and be open and honest about the future. Otherwise, staff may start filling in the communication gaps themselves with gossip and rumours, and that is never good for business.

### 2. Be consistent with the messages

Employees are better informed in this day and age, than in previous recessions. They have access to a wide variety of communication media including the internet, blogs, instant messaging, etc. and this means they may get to hear something about the company's clients or suppliers before you do. If you then tell them something that contradicts what they already know, they will start to wonder what else you are being inconsistent about. So be sure that the messages you are telling staff and the outside world are the same.

### 3. Get employees on-side

Times may be tough but 'us Brits' are known to excel when faced with adversity so explain to employees how they can make a difference and influence future outcomes. Tell them what they can do to help keep the business going, the importance of looking for new business opportunities, maintaining good cash flow and the need to keep expenses down. You might be surprised just how effective this can be.

#### 4. Customer care

As well as telling them what they need to do internally you should also be reminding them that keeping existing customers in a downturn is absolutely vital. With everyone competing harder for business, providing a good service to customers, cheerfully and positively will help to retain them. Customers will also be affected by the downturn and your employees should be sympathetic and try to look for opportunities to help the customer through. If customers get negative vibes from your employees they may be fearful that you will not deliver what you have promised.

#### 5. Tell them what will change



If it becomes clear that changes are going to be necessary then you must tell employees about the change and involve them as early as you can. They will have questions about these changes and you must try to address these directly and honestly. Outline the reasons for the change, the positive effects, the risks, how you are going to make the change happen and how they can help the process.

#### 6. Tell them what will not change

If you do not plan to change anything then tell employees that that will be the case, as a way of reassuring them. It is always a good idea to also let them know that the company's core values are not changing, for example, that good customer services and staff are important and that everyone should be treated fairly, etc.

#### 7. Provide training

Use the downturn to improve employees' skills. Help them to understand the issues that the company is facing by, perhaps, providing some basic financial education. Not only will this help them understand the company's position better but it could have the added benefit of helping them to manage their personal finances better. It will certainly develop a workforce that is more commercially aware, in the future, which is no bad thing.

#### 8. Be seen

At a time like this do not hide away constantly in your office poring over the books but make sure that you get out there, mingling and talking with staff to gauge their opinion and getting any feedback they have gained from customers and suppliers. It is important to lead by example and let employees see what you are doing to ensure the Company and their jobs survive the downturn.

#### In 2 HR Viewpoint

#### Question

*"We have an employee who has disclosed they have a second job. What should we do?"*



**Answer**

There are a number of ways to deal with this.

1. Often this can be classed as a disciplinary on the basis of 'non-disclosure' of information. There may also be a loss of trust, if the company is left wondering what other information this employee may not have disclosed. It would not automatically be a dismissal for gross misconduct, however, unless they have signed a contract of employment stating they will work exclusively for the company.
2. If the employee has not divulged the identity of the other employer and you have reason to believe it may be a competitor, then this could be an alleged gross misconduct. In that case it would be dealt with this under the disciplinary procedure.
3. If the 'other work' is affecting the employee's work performance because they are always tired, unable to work late when required, etc. then it would be a performance matter, dealt with under your capability procedure.

If you have a similar situation on which you need some advice, then contact us via the website here



I hope you have found this edition of **Getting In 2 HR** useful.

If you have a particular topic you would like to see included in a forthcoming issue then please send your topic and/or any questions to be answered to [info@In2HR.co.uk](mailto:info@In2HR.co.uk)

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Regards,

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