

TOP **10** TIPS FOR TALKING TO EMPLOYEES DURING TOUGH TIMES

1. **Communicate Early and Often:** In the absence of information, innuendo and rumor fill gap. They hear the same rumors, see the same trends and observe the same behaviors. It's okay to say you can't answer something but communicate what you are able to say and if you can't say something, tell them why. Use communication as an opportunity to dispel rumors.
2. **Talk to a Friend:** Be compassionate and show concern for what they feel. Let them ask questions. Let them talk so they feel someone is listening. Don't make promises or guarantees or lead them to believe everything will be fine when you don't know that it will but put yourself in their shoes to better understand their concerns as you would want someone to do for you.
3. **Calm During the Storm:** If you look panicked or scared, you will cause alarm and increase their anxiety. It's also important not to play dumb or act clueless. Let people know you have their best interest at heart and will tell them what you can when you can.
4. **Be a Role Model:** You are facing the same uncertainty as employees. It is more important than ever for you to lead by being a positive role model who reassures people that you will all get through this. Instead of blaming, bad-mouthing or apologizing for something out of your control, try to create as positive an atmosphere as possible by conveying confidence during tough times.
5. **Authentic and Honest:** Communicate quickly and directly, don't "b.s." people. It's more important than ever to KEEP IT REAL as people can see right through a phony.
6. **Address their Fears:** Don't just address the actual problem, but make sure you address their fears and concerns. That's what makes people talk. Remember, just because you know it, doesn't mean they know it.
7. **Become Them:** It's also important to differentiate between listeners to focus on what they need to know and what they want to know. If you are speaking to team members about a new product, they may want to know about competition, safety data and strategic planning. Yet, if you ran into your neighbor at the supermarket, she might be more interested in side effects,

benefits and how this differs from what is already available. So, know the listener---the employee.

8. **Eye Contact:** Look directly at the person who is speaking to you. Put the blackberry away, move away from the computer screen, don't answer your phone and give them your full attention.
9. **Be Direct:** It's easy to get stuck in the mud and over explain where you've been instead of where you're headed. For example, an executive trying to convince investors to strap in for a rocky ride that would be worth the results, spent nearly six minutes delivering background information before focusing attention on the main point. Finally, she said: "This is an exciting product with great potential to address a huge unmet need and we have a strategic plan in place to hit 1 billion in sales in 2010." Get to the point quickly.
10. **Make Others Feel Important:** Author John Maxwell said: "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." When you take time to learn what matters to others and seek their input, you're communicating that you value what they have to say. For example, asking questions such as "What are your concerns?" or "What can I do to help?", fosters an atmosphere of trust and collaboration where people are encouraged to have a voice.

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