



SUPPORTING CHANGE: TIPS FOR LEADERS FOR ENGAGING STAFF

The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion it has taken place. ~ George Bernard Shaw

When it comes to organizational change, there is uncertainty. “How does this affect my job,” “what is my manager going to expect of me,” “how is this going to make us work better,” “will I be able to do it all” and “will I even have a job?” These are just some of the questions that can arise. Research shows that people react to change on a spectrum from excited to fearful. In the absence of information, they tend to fill in the gaps with their own stories. You may have heard the phrase, “perception is reality.” In uncertain organizational change, misperception becomes the reality and this can lead to undesired outcomes. As a leader, it is important for you to provide your team with clear and consistent information to alleviate uncertainty, positively engage with change and achieve organizational goals.

This document will provide you with strategies to keep staff informed and engaged with changes the university is undertaking to improve service delivery, provide better value to faculty, staff and students, and the launch of ConnectionPoint.

When communicating in times of change, a key to success is to convey consistent messaging in a clear, unambiguous way. Consider the following important components and questions to guide your activity:

<p>KNOWLEDGE <i>What do we want staff to KNOW?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the change? • What is the reason for the change? • Who is impacted and how? • What are the benefits? • What is in it for me? • Where can I get more information? • When will I get more information? • What is the progress to date?
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ATTITUDES <i>What do we want staff to FEEL?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excited about change opportunities • Like they belong (included) • Involved in the process • Ownership • Valued
BEHAVIOURS <i>What do we need staff to DO?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short / long-term activities? • Be ambassadors of change • Find and act on opportunities for improvement
<i>When do we want staff to act?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the timelines? • What are the deadlines?

We want you to be supported in delivering these messages to your staff. If you would like to access supports, please contact Tracy Thornton at 306-966-2166 or tracy.thornton@usask.ca to discuss how we can best serve you.

You know your team best. When determining change management strategies for your team or unit, consider the following:

- How much time do you have available?
- Is your team large or small?
- How do they like to receive information?
- How comfortable are you with the message you are providing?
- Who is the best person to deliver the message (dean, department head, mid-level managers, etc.)?
- How aware is your team of the changes to service delivery? *This can impact your content and the duration of the messaging.*
- Have you heard any concerns from your staff? *If you can anticipate the types of questions your team may have, we can assist with key messaging.*



Options for delivering the message

Method	Benefits	Things to consider
Open door, face-to-face discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to get a read on how individuals are coping with the change • Questions are asked and answered in a safe/private environment • More detailed • Able to tailor the message to the individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming • May have to repeat the same message • Depending on the questions asked, staff may receive different levels/amounts of information
Written communication (email, newsletters, PAWS bulletin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a clear statement • Fast, cost effective, low time commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May get lost in an inbox • No ability for immediate questions or feedback
Brown bag lunch sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available to those who wish to take advantage (focused group) • Time efficient • Questions/concerns are addressed immediately • Informal, puts staff at ease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As it is optional, some staff may choose not to go and the message may become diluted or miscommunicated when repeated by peers and colleagues
Team meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the staff are together hearing the same message at the same time • Captive crowd • Communicate to a large crowd in a time effective manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some staff members may not be comfortable asking questions in a team setting
ConnectionPoint website (connectionpoint.usask.ca)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most current and comprehensive information on the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff may not be aware of or use the website



Method	Benefits	Things to consider
Informal individual check ins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides staff an opportunity to digest the information and get back to you when they are ready 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time consuming depending upon the size of your team

Tips for delivering the message

- Communicate often and use a variety of methods, even if it is repeating the same information. Avoid an information vacuum.
- Have a senior leader from your college, school or unit kick-off the information session
- Demonstrate confidence and support for the change.
- Focus on the positives.
- Use simple words, and avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Use visuals.
- Create a comfortable environment for the message to be delivered.
- Ensure there is enough time so that you are not rushed and staff have an opportunity to ask questions.
- Be an active listener, encourage employees to engage with the material/change.
- Be open and offer to meet staff one on one for those uncomfortable with public speaking.
- It is okay to admit you do not know the answer. Have someone take notes and advise you will get back to the employees with the answer.
- Use body language appropriately—stand up straight, make eye contact and smile. This conveys confidence in the message you are sending.
- Use tone and humour effectively. This will convey excitement about the message.
- Personally use the services provided. This provides an opportunity to speak about your own experience and lends credibility to the message.
- Be appreciative. Remember to thank your team for their time. It will cost you nothing and is a simple courtesy that people remember.
- Determine who on the team your staff trusts and ask them for feedback on the conversation and for advice on engaging staff.
- Identify your champions of change. These individuals will be effective in encouraging others to positively engage with change.



Supports for staff

You may wish to conclude your meeting by advising your team of the supports available to assist them.

- Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)
- Union access
- Conversations with supervisor
- If possible, emphasize openness and willingness for low-stress, face-to-face communication

Support for change: implementation of service design and delivery/ConnectionPoint

Changes resulting from service design and delivery and transitioning certain administrative tasks and staff to ConnectionPoint provides leaders with the opportunity to review staff complement and make decisions on the best use of resources moving forward. When considering change and transition within your unit, you may wish to consider:

- the work left behind if a staff member transitions to ConnectionPoint;
- the resourcing required to facilitate the work left behind;
- the ability to transition this work to others on the team;
- whether there is need to fill the position immediately or if it's appropriate to wait to hire until there is a better understanding of staff resourcing needs; and
- ConnectionPoint service offerings being launched this fall that create an impact on your team.

Staff in Human Resources are available to assist you, as a leader, and your extended leadership team to work through these questions so you can determine the best way forward for staff resourcing in your unit. If you would like support for planning and/or an electronic copy of the tools available, please contact Tracy Thornton at 306-966-2166 or tracy.thornton@usask.ca.