

Organizational Change and Communication

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**Workplace Context**

Organizations are operating in a complex world where they must continuously adapt to change to compete and thrive. In recent years, downsizing has become a common restructuring practice across many industries. Organizations are restructuring due to several reasons including adapting to new technology (Artificial Intelligence), adjusting to hybrid work culture after the Covid-19 pandemic, and aligning with market demands. One example of restructuring is seen on Amazon which resulted in 16000 employees losing their jobs according to Galetti (2026). Similarly, many colleges and universities have restructured their academic programs and classes in response to budget cuts and technology initiatives. Although restructuring efforts may help organizations reduce costs and improve efficiency, poor communication during change can cause employees to feel uncertain, confused, and resist change. To reduce employees' resistance to change and help them understand change, transparent communication is an essential skill for managers and leaders during organizational restructuring. Restructuring is an organizational change issue that can have a significant impact on employees' trust, productivity, and commitment. Restructuring creates uncertainty and chaos for employees. As a result, managers and leaders should communicate openly with employees and ensure they have an opportunity for feedback, which can increase commitment, feelings of autonomy, and self-efficacy (Lee & Teo, 2005).

### **Concept Definition and Research Synthesis**

Change is defined as “any alteration or modification of organizational structures or processes” (Zorn et al., 1999, as cited in Lewis, 2019, P.25). According to Lewis (2019), organizational changes can be categorized into planned changes, and unplanned changes. Restructuring is a type of planned change that has become common among many industries, particularly in the tech industry. Kurgat (2016) defines restructuring as a process of making a

major change in organization structure, which often involves diminishing roles, reducing management level, and changing the structure of organizations. By doing so, organizations aim to manage costs and enhance productivity. However, these changes bring uncertainty, which can cause employees to feel confused, overwhelmed, and resistant. According to Men et al. (2022), transparent communication helps employees make sense of change during organizational change. Transparent communication refers to openly sharing relevant information while providing space for feedback and encouraging accountability (Li et al., 2021).

In other words, transparent communication is simply about delivering accurate information in an authentic way that helps employees understand the reason for change. The three dimensions of transparent communication: accountable, participative, and informational transparency help managers effectively communicate with employees during organizational change (Li et al., 2021). Accountable transparency is about telling both the positive and negative sides of change, while participative transparency is about providing space for employees to ask questions, offer feedback, and raise concerns. The informational transparency is about sharing the essential information and facts employees need to understand change and prepare for it (Li et al., 2021). Applying these three dimensions of transparent communication will help employees better understand change and reduce confusion during the change process.

As employees rely on the message from leadership to understand the reason for change, lack of information can cause employees to feel uncertain (Men et al., 2022). It also leads to employee conflict, which can result in employee stress, dissatisfaction, and lower performance according to Men et al (2022). Another negative outcome of ineffective communication will be employees' turnover intentions, job satisfaction, and lower commitment and trust (Men et al., 2022). Transparent communication is important for managers and leaders because it helps

employees cope with uncertainty during organizational change (Men et al.,2022). In addition, it is essential to support employees to quickly adapt to change. Change can still fail if employees do not have a clear direction on what things need to be done, when, how and by whom (Ford &Ford, 1995).

One important organization theory that explains why transparent communication is crucial during organizational change is the Uncertainty Reduction Theory. It suggests that employees seek information to cope with the feelings of uncertainty during organizational change. They will use two different ways to cope with uncertainty. “Problem-focused” coping involves finding solutions, assessing pros and cons of options, and solving the problem, while “emotion-focused” coping is about managing emotional distress linked to change through looking for social support, and interpreting events positively (Men et al.,2022). To support both emotional and problem-focused coping needs of employees, leaders and managers should communicate openly about change with employees. Similarly, research has shown that supportive, caring, and compassionate communication from managers and leaders can help employees better understand change and reduce uncertainty (Men et al.,2022). When employees understand the reason for change, they are more likely to support change.

Organizational change research highlights the role of sensemaking in how employees understand and respond to change initiatives. During organizational change, particularly organizational restructuring employees seek to know the reason behind change. The process in which employees' efforts to understand what is happening, asking questions, and looking for ways to decide how to respond is called sensemaking according to Weick (2005). In such moments, employees depend on the messages they receive from the managers and leaders on the change happening in an organization. For leaders to support employees, they engage in

sensegiving process by using communication to shape how employees interpret the reasons for change. Pratt (2000) defines sensegiving as a process in which leaders try to align employees' personal values and identities to the organization's values and goals to enhance organizational identification. During organizational restructuring, leaders' transparent communication helps guide employees' sensemaking by providing clear, correct, and honest information.

### **Why it Matters**

In today's business world, restructuring is an important issue affecting employee productivity, retention, and workplace culture. During restructuring, employees often feel uncertain and insecure about their roles and expectations. Poor communication will create confusion and stress. One important outcome of organizational change communication is employee trust in leadership, as transparent communication influences whether employees support or resist change. When leaders communicate openly and honestly during restructuring, employees are more likely to feel valued and remain engaged throughout the transition (Jiang & Men, 2017). Employees are more willing to accept change when managers and leaders allow them to engage in participatory communication (Yue et al., 2019). Further, involving employees in decision making- process and asking for their feedback during organizational restructuring results in a higher level of job satisfaction and commitment to the organization (Husain, 2013). Although ineffective communication can weaken trust, lower engagement, and increase turnover intentions, transparent internal communication is positively associated with higher employee trust, stronger engagement, and greater organizational commitment (Li et al., 2021).

### **Educational Session Preview**

The target participants for this educational session include key organizational stakeholders, such as managers, leaders, supervisors, and employees. The purpose of this

educational session is to inform participants about the importance of transparent communication during organizational restructuring as well as to help them understand the relationship between internal transparent communication and employee engagement and trust in an organization. As a result of this session, participants will be able to:

- Explain the concepts of uncertainty management, sensemaking and sensegiving theories for navigating organizational change and uncertainty
- Define transparent communication and differentiate the three dimensions of transparent communication
- Create transparent message and respond to employee concern during a major change

An activity that I will use will give participants an opportunity to apply the concepts into practice. It is a scenario-based group exercise. I will divide participants into small groups, and each group will be given a different organizational change scenario to review and discuss. In their groups, participants will apply the three dimensions of transparent communication: accountable, participative, and informational transparency to support employee cope with uncertainty and reduce their resistance to change.

### **Conclusion**

This paper focuses on the role of transparent communication during organizational changes, particularly organization restructuring. Organizations are making changes in their structure, size, and culture due to several reasons including adapting to new technology or reducing costs. As these changes create uncertainty and ambiguity among employees, it is important for managers to openly share information with employees to lower stress and anxiety

among employees as well as diminish employees' resistance to change. In addition, as transparent communication is linked to employee engagement and trust in organizations, it is essential for leaders to provide complete, truthful, and unbiased change-related information.

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#### Appendix A: Simple Launch Communication

This education session is intended for key organizational stakeholders, such as leaders, managers, and employees who are affected by restructuring and have an important role in how change is communicated and implemented. The purpose of this email is to invite participants to attend an educational session where they can learn about the importance of transparent communication during organizational restructuring as well as understand the relationship between transparent communication and employee trust and engagement in an organization.

Subject: You're Invited: Transparent Communication During Organizational Restructuring

Dear Managers, Leaders, and Employees

I hope you are doing well. I am writing to invite you all to attend an educational session about the role of transparent communication during organizational restructuring on **Friday, March 20 at 10am in the Kansas Union, International Room**. This session is designed to help you understand the role of transparent communication during organizational restructuring and equip you with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to successfully implement change while supporting employees throughout the process.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to seeing you all in the session.

Best regards,

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