

Organizational Change and Communication

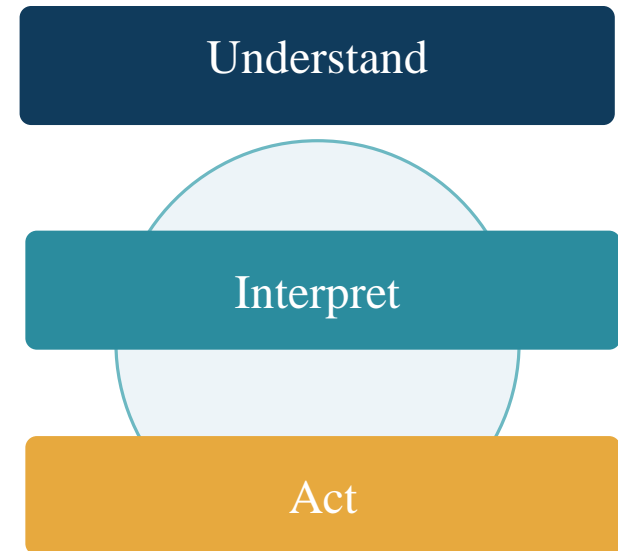
Transparent Communication during Organizational Restructuring

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March 15th, 2026



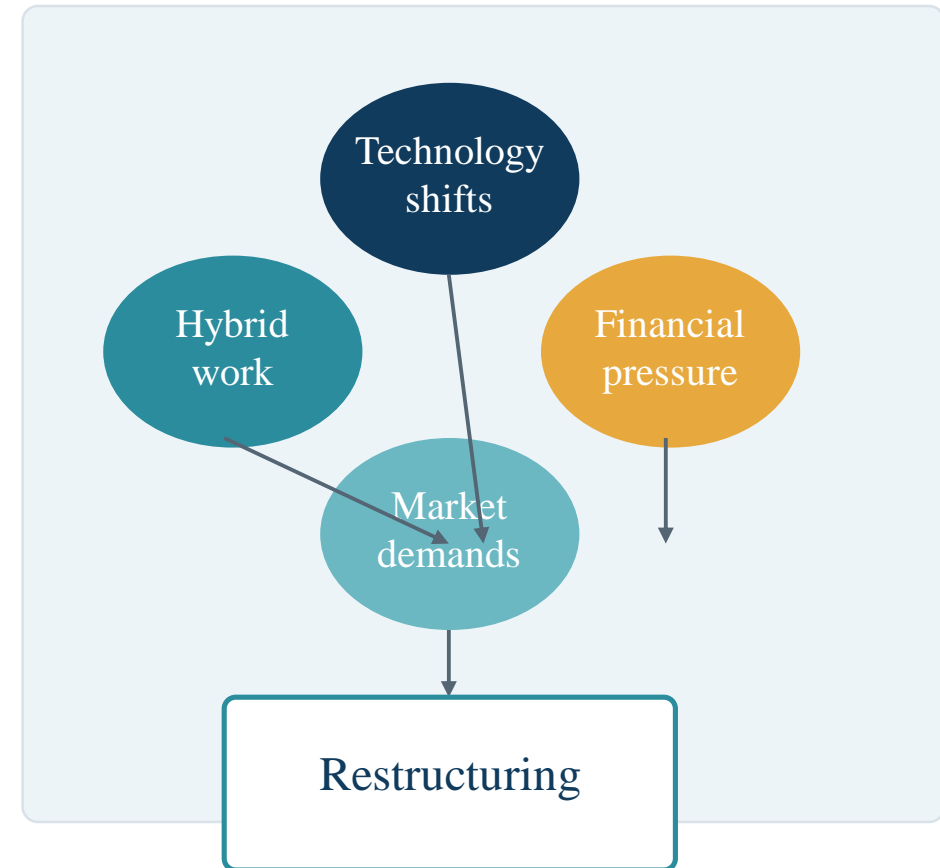
Learning objectives

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



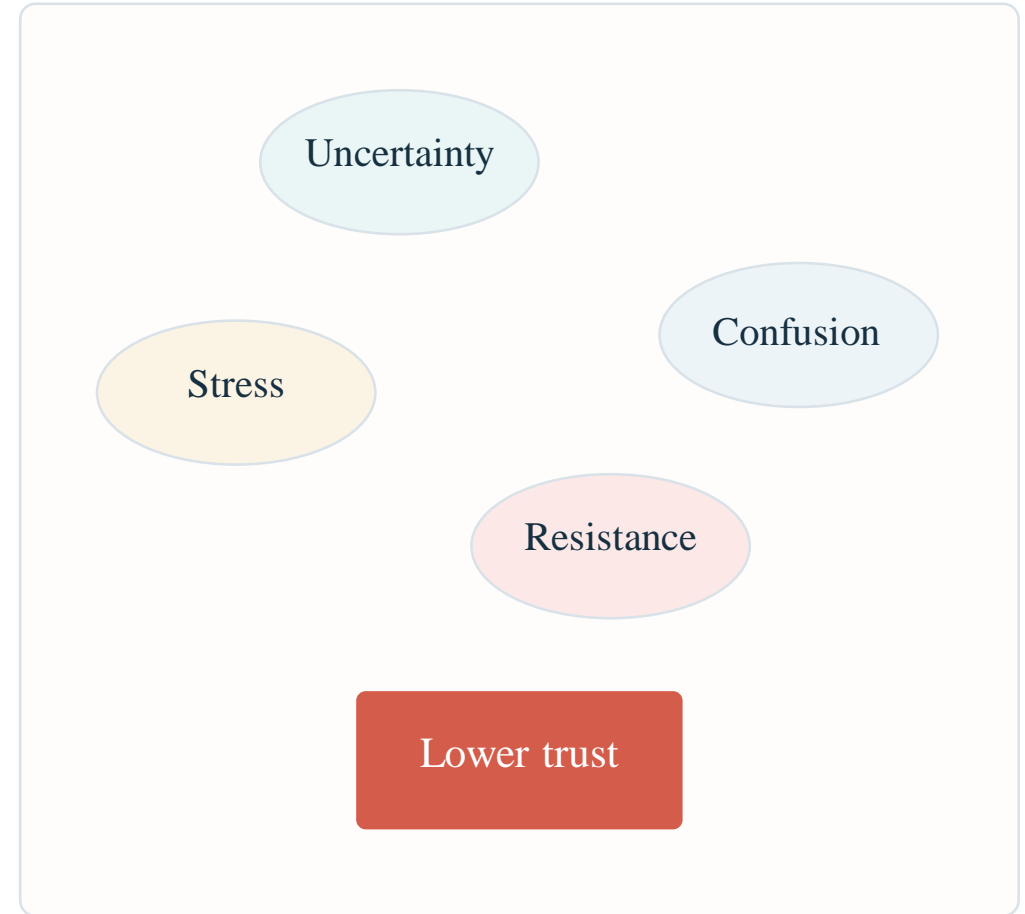
Why restructuring demands communication

- Organizations restructure to respond to technology shifts, hybrid work, financial pressure, and market demands.
- Structural changes may improve efficiency, but they also disrupt routines and roles
- When people do not understand the reason for change, uncertainty grows quickly.
- Communication is what turns a disruptive event into a manageable transition.



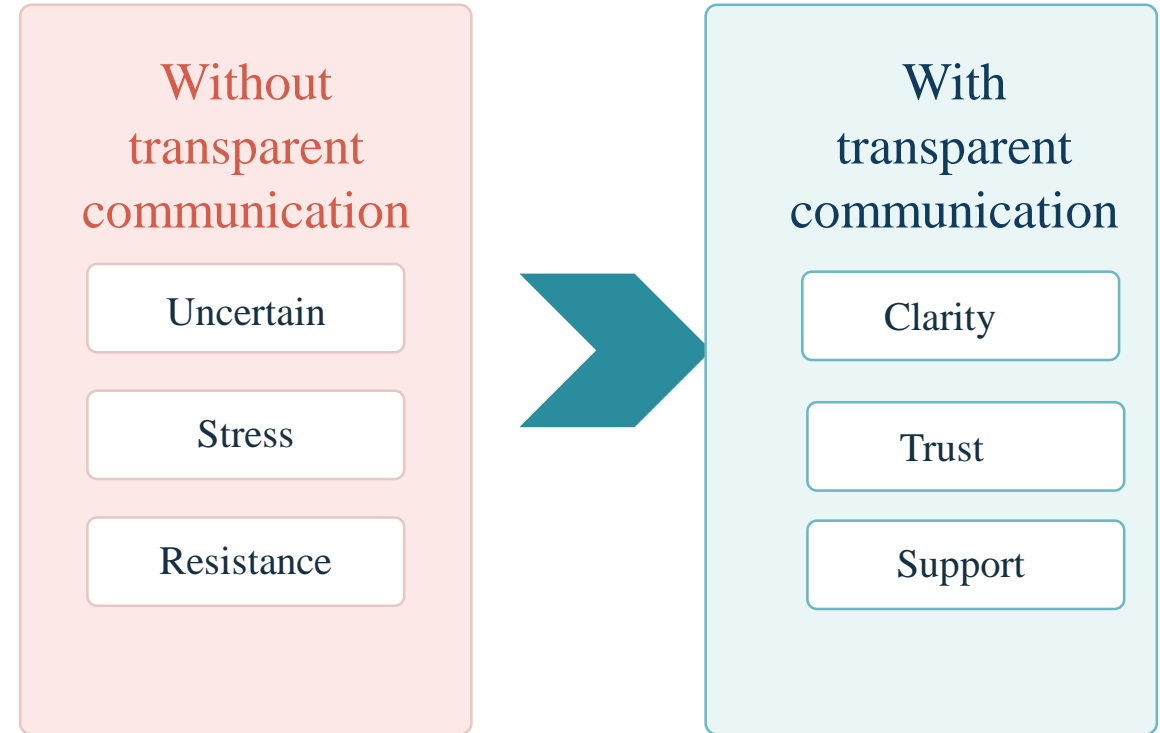
Employees experiences during change

- Employees often feel uncertain about job security, expectations, and future direction.
- Ambiguous messages create confusion and emotional strain.
- Involving employees in decision-making process and participatory communication results in higher job satisfaction (Husain, 2013).



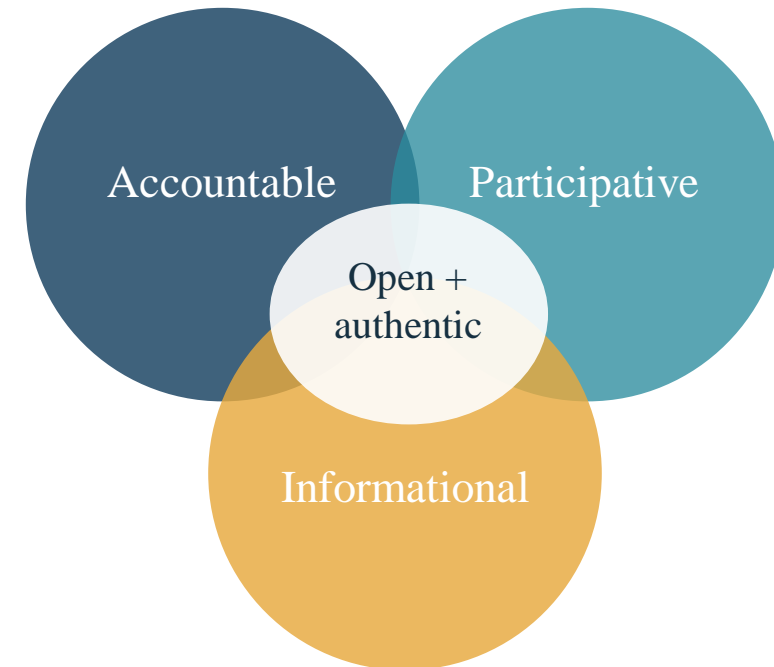
The Role of Transparent Communication

- Poor communication leaves employees to fill in the blanks on their own.
- Transparent communication gives people a clearer picture of what is changing and why (Men et al.2022)
- Clarity helps employees interpret events, regulate emotions, and decide how to respond.
- The goal is to reduce uncertainty (Men et al.2022).



Transparent communication Definition

- It involves sharing relevant information openly, accurately, and in time for people to use it (Li et al.2021).
- It is also relational: employees need space to ask questions and receive honest responses.
- Transparent communication helps people make sense of change rather than merely hear about it (Weick, 2005).
- Three dimensions are especially useful during restructuring.



Accountable Transparency

- Tell the truth about both positive and negative sides of change
- Acknowledge the impact of change.
- Explain how decisions are being made and who is responsible.
- Accountability builds credibility even when the news is difficult.

Participative Transparency

- Employees need opportunities to ask questions, offer feedback, and raise concerns.
- Participation helps leaders understand how change is being interpreted on the ground.
- Inviting voice increases autonomy, commitment, and willingness to adapt.
- Two-way communication is especially important after major announcements.

Informational transparency

- Share the essential facts employees need to understand the change and prepare for it.
- Answer the practical questions: what, why, when, how, and what support is available.
- Provide update so people know when to expect more information

Uncertainty Reduction, Sensemaking, Sensegiving

- During change, employees actively search for information that helps them reduce uncertainty (Men et al.2022).
- Two ways to cope with uncertainty: Problem- Focused and Emotion-Focused
- Sensemaking is how people interpret “what is happening” and decide what to do next (Weick, 2005)
- Sensegiving is how leaders use communication to shape shared understanding (Pratt, 2000).

Outcomes that matter to organizations

- Transparent internal communication is associated with stronger employee trust in leadership and the organization (Jiang & Men, 2017).
- When employees feel informed and heard, engagement and commitment are more likely to hold during transition (Yue et al.,2019).
- Participatory communication can improve job satisfaction and willingness to accept change (Husain, 2013).
- The alternative is costly: lower trust, lower morale, and higher turnover intentions.

Trust

Commitment

Job
satisfaction

Openness
to change

Learning activity: scenario-based group exercise

- Form groups of 3 to 4 and read the organizational change restructuring scenario on the next slide.
- Identify the main sources of uncertainty and likely points of resistance.
- Use all three dimensions of transparent communication to plan a response.
- Be ready to share one short message with the class.



Scenario and group task

Scenario

A university is consolidating two student-support units after budget reductions. Several employees will have revised responsibilities, but leaders do not yet have every staffing detail finalized. Rumors are spreading, and staff members are worried about workload, role clarity, and whether their input matters.

Your group task

- Name one accountable, one participative, and one informational.
- Draft a 4-5 sentence message to employees.
- Explain how your approach would reduce uncertainty and resistance.

Debrief questions

1. Which communication dimension was hardest to apply and why?

2. What did your group include to reduce uncertainty immediately?

3. How did your communication approach support both clarity and participation?

4. What would make employees more likely to trust the message you created?

Key take-aways

- Restructuring is not only a structural change; it is an organizational issue.
- Transparent communication reduces uncertainty and helps employees make sense of change.
- Accountable, participative, and informational transparency each address a different communication need.
- Trust grows when leaders are honest, specific, and open to feedback.

Be Clear

Be honest

Be specific

Invite feedback

Follow up