

Action Steps

Serving Up Difficult News

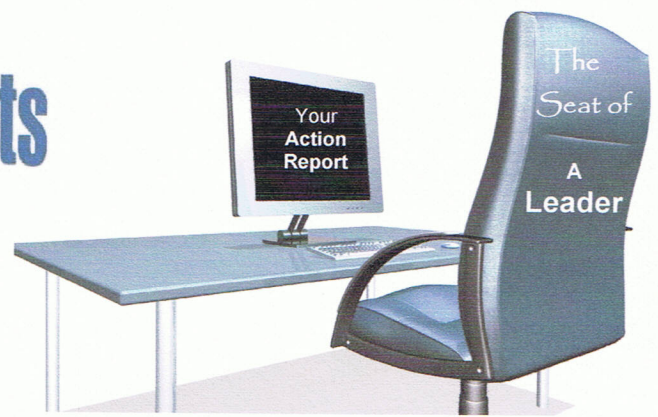
Make smooth and effective announcements by answering these questions in advance:

1. Who should be present, and when is the optimum time to make the announcement?
2. What informational materials can I hand out at the time of the announcement?
3. Is there a subgroup that deserves to hear the news before the meeting?
4. What can you share with the employees that will help them understand how the news, Changes, or plans will affect their lives?

"We need to think before we communicate"

~ Matt Rose
President & CEO
BNSF Railways

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It was just this past year that I worked with a client going through a major transition. They were battered by the economy, a poor decision on an international acquisition, and forced to consider layoffs. Once the decision was made, layoffs were planned and announced.

Soon after this announcement someone considered the prospect of workplace violence. After carefully crafting a revised policy, the decision was made to make the announcement that guns were not allowed on company property.

Although there was consideration to **Action Step #2** (informational material), there was no consideration of **Action Step #4** (what can you share...).

A picture of a gun with circle and line through it were posted at all entrances and exits as the sum total communication plan of the revised policy.

The President and CEO of BNSF Railways, (recently acquired as a Warren Buffet company) said this to me, "We need to think before we communicate!"

Too bad this other company didn't know to "think" before they communicate. As one leader said to me after the posting, "if I wasn't thinking about bringing a gun to work before, I'm sure thinking about it now!"

Use the listed steps to help you think through serving up difficult news.