

## Worksheet: Anatomy of a Message

When it comes to communicating high stakes and important information to the team, what to say and how to say it is key to connecting with your audience. This **8-part template** will ensure you inform, calm, and educate your teams about what matters.

### Part 1: CLEARLY STATE WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

Start off your communication with a clear overview of what is happening – address decisions that have been made and the context for why those decisions were made now. Keep it to 2-3 straightforward sentences.

Example:

*We've decided that now is the time for us to take the office virtual. The situation has been changing rapidly. Today there were many announcements about cancellations of public events and school closings, and companies are almost universally issuing no-travel policies and work-at-home policies.*

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### Part 2: SHARE A BROADER PERSPECTIVE

Follow that up with reassurance. Point out why this is a good decision within the broader context of what's happening.

Example:

*There is really no downside for us. We work well virtually. And by taking care of ourselves, we take care of each other, and we take care of the firm.*

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### Part 3: OFFER POSITIVITY AND SILVER LININGS

Without being falsely upbeat, now is the time to reinforce any positive aspects of the situation. Point out specifically why people should have reason to be optimistic.

Example:

*On a positive note, our business is in good shape. We are as ready as we can be. For Q1, we are on track with sales and our pipeline is strong.*

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### Part 4: PROVIDE AN HONEST ASSESSMENT

The next step is to provide a realistic view of what might happen. Include the context of the situation and reassurance of how the company will react.

Example:

*Let's be clear-eyed about what's ahead. There will be an impact on our business, and we'll pull together to minimize it. Remember the entire country is in the same boat. And the good news is that government agencies, public institutions and the private sector have taken quick action, and this will keep infection rates down.*

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## Part 5: RALLY THE TROOPS AND TELL THEM HOW

The next step is to bring the team together around the cause and provide a clear sense of what they can do in the situation to help the company and themselves.

Example:

*Now let's talk about how we work together. It takes more than technology. We must communicate frequently and be in touch. Let's not overload each other's inboxes. Set up quick meetings, use Zoom video, and Zoom chat, or get on the phone. Go out of your way to talk, especially if you see an email string forming. Using all our virtual technology will not only make life easier and better, it will help us avoid misunderstandings and reduce stress.*

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## Part 6: SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Follow that with a set of specific expectations—what you are looking for from people in the short term.

Example:

*I hope it goes without saying that this is an "all- hands-on-deck" period when we need everybody treating the home office just as you would your workplace. Please stay engaged all day. We will work regular hours from 8:30-5:30. If you have concerns or challenges given unique circumstances – please reach out.*

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## Part 7: ADMIT WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

Be candid with what you don't know. This will help build trust that the communication is not simply a whitewash and will put uncertainties – for the firm, and for your team members – into a context that offers transparency and encourages discussion.

Example:

*Since we really don't know right now what course the spread of the virus will take, it's hard to know right now how long we'll need to stay virtual. We'll evaluate everything daily and make decisions together. You can expect to hear from me on a daily or weekly basis as new information emerges or decisions are made.*

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## Part 8: ENERGIZE AND MOBILIZE

Close your communication with a message that seeks to energize and mobilize everyone to action. Give them reason to be hopeful and make sure they understand why you are hopeful too.

Example:

*We're a great team. We are innovative, we are creative, we are strong. We also care about each other. I'm betting on us. We are in a good position come through this stronger than ever. Thank you!*

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