

Communicating Change

Month 6 Leadership Practice

Purpose

This month's leadership practice invites you to explore how communication influences people's experience of change. Effective communication is more than sharing information—it helps people understand the purpose behind a change, navigate uncertainty, and see how the change connects to their work and the broader mission.

The goal is to communicate change in ways that foster understanding, transparency, trust, and engagement.

Why This Matters

Change is a constant in academic medicine. New policies, evolving priorities, technological advances, organizational restructuring, and changing workforce needs require individuals and teams to adapt continuously.

Research suggests that people often struggle not because they are unaware that change is occurring, but because they do not fully understand why it is happening, how decisions were made, or what the change means for them and their work. Effective communication can help build understanding, reduce uncertainty, and support adaptation during periods of change.

Galbraith, M. (2018). Don't just tell employees organizational changes are coming—explain why. *Harvard Business Review*, 5, 6–11.

This Month's Leadership Practice

Over the next several days, identify a current or upcoming change that affects your team and intentionally incorporate the following communication practices:

1. **Connect the change to purpose.** Help people understand why the change is occurring and how it connects to your team's mission, goals, or broader organizational priorities.
2. **Communicate transparently.** Share what is known, acknowledge what remains uncertain, and provide updates as new information becomes available.
3. **Engage those most affected.** Identify opportunities for individuals to ask questions, provide input, and contribute to implementation when appropriate.
4. **Encourage shared ownership.** Support the individuals who will help lead, implement, or influence the change, and clarify how they can contribute to success.

Reflection Questions

After completing this month's leadership practice, reflect on the following:

1. How did you communicate both the purpose of the change and the practical implications for your team?

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2. How effectively were you able to explain the potential impact of the change on the people affected?
3. What questions did people ask? What does that tell you about what they need to understand?
4. Where were you transparent about uncertainty? How did people respond?
5. What opportunities did you create for questions, dialogue, or feedback? What effect did that have on the conversation?
6. What would you do differently next time you communicate a change?