

How to Communicate during Covid-19 Disruptions



Tips for Freight and Logistics Leaders

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The Covid-19 outbreak has come hot on the heels of deteriorations in world trade and disrupted business in diverse ways. The international freight and logistics sectors have not been spared. Covid-19 has jeopardised meeting customers' needs and expectations to connect faster to more markets in the digital era.

News on the outbreak may not be certain or reassuring but as a leader, your role is to reassure people and deal with suppliers when you speak up. Standing in front of your workers, board and business partners will never be easy in these circumstances.

The business questions are plentiful: How can you return to business-as-usual when do many aspects of it are unsettled? How can you mitigate the delays in shipments and deliveries, or clear new custom protocols? How can you ensure continuity and uplift morale when the end of the outbreak is not yet in sight?

These fluid, uncertain issues will understandably cause you to stand back and let your other colleagues handle the situation. Now is the time to pause, reflect and plan how you are personally communicating to your key stakeholders. Your business partners and workers need to see your face and hear the message from the leader. When you stand before them and speak in such a challenging time, you convey:

- Their value to the organisation

- Management's commitment
- Your involvement in continuity planning and operations

Your ability to speak up with courage as early as possible will shape something critical in any work environment: trust.

Here are some tips to ensure that when you do step into the spotlight, you project your most genuine and effective self. This could be via a video recording or 'live' feed, since gathering in large numbers should be avoided at this time.

Choose Your Words

Take note of the things you want to say and rehearse these points. Be careful how you word your sentences and what kind of phrases or images you associate your company with. You always want to point your audience in the right direction.

Listen to Yourself

Listen carefully to how you deliver the points. You could use your phone to record. Rewind the clips back and open your ears.

Next, analyse your performance. Carefully assess how you are speaking to the audience. How confident do you sound? Do you sound authentic? Rehearse, rehearse and rehearse again until you can do it with flair. Don't give up, this is an important step. You will need to reassure people of your

capability in handling the situation.

Warm Up Your Voice

Ensure that your voice is warmed up and smooth. Drink some warm water with lemon to soothe it and have a glass near you.

Humming scales could also warm up your voice. Use the lower vocal tones which come off more self-assuring.

Purposely pause before key words and give them extra vocal emphasis when you rehearse. Pay close attention to your vocal qualities when you listen to your playback.

Deliberate Movements

Mind your body language. Practise walking into the room – yes, really. Your audience won't know they are doing this, but they'll form an impression of your confidence from the way you walk and stand. They will draw conclusions from your eye contact – or the lack of.

Get a trusted colleague to film your rehearsal on your mobile phone camera. As you replay, make sure your body language delivers your intended message.

In the 'real moment', lift your chin, align your shoulders fully to the camera, move purposefully and maximise your eye contact.

Show Your Care

A final and most important tip: acknowledge their efforts. Thank them for all they are doing to cope with this difficult situation. Thank them for understanding the disruptions in processes, shipments and deliveries. Thank them for adapting to changing working flows. For being responsible with health precautions so that everyone stays safe. For supporting quarantined co-workers. For coming in today, despite concerns for their health.

This is an opportunity for you to show your partners and workers what matters. And you have this opportunity to do it well. ✦