

# Bob Legge

We help clients achieve great results by  
improving performance and return on people

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## What employees want to know

**The single biggest communications mistake** I see companies make today is to think of their employees as one homogenous group. Effective communications depends on understanding audience needs. Different employees have different needs, especially during difficult times.

To begin with, think of three groups:

1. **Franchise Players** -- These are highly productive and career-minded people. They're ones you regularly call on when you have a special project or need to assemble a cross-functional team. They need to know the business strategic direction and the impact on their career prospects. They are evaluating senior management's competence in leading the organization. While these people feel a connection with the company, they want to work for a winner and make their mark. The last thing they want is to be stuck working for a weak leader. If they don't see clear leadership and a cogent plan to move ahead, they will start to mentally check-out and begin looking for another job. They'll be the first out the door when a better opportunity is identified. Always provide these employees with a compelling reason to believe in the company's future -- help them to understand the big picture and where you're headed.
2. **Nit-Pickers are often competent performers** and can be found in all roles from individual contributors to managers. They are single-minded and heavily concerned about their own jobs. They are evaluating, "How will the change affect what I do, who I report to, and how I interact with others?" They are very vocal and can come across as quite negative and self-centered. They don't care about the strategic message anywhere near as much as how their jobs, reporting relationships, policies, and procedures may change. Tell them how things will work going forward.
3. **Tree Huggers** -- Not to be confused with environmental activists. Tree huggers get their name from their ability to hang on no matter how hard someone is shaking the tree. What they care most about is how people are treated, and in particular, how they will be treated. For example, they're the ones who want to know how people who get separated are

treated. On the positive side, a tree hugger will do whatever you want. They'll put their heads down and run into walls for you, as long as they know they'll be treated "fairly" -- whatever that means.

**Make sure your communications address** all these concerns:

- Why are we doing this?
- What is the plan to move forward?
- What will change and what won't.
- How are we going to treat people?

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**If you don't finish this recession with a leaner and stronger workforce, then you haven't been trying.**

What metrics do you have in place to tell you the following?

1. Do our employees understand our business priorities?
2. Can each one connect their job to our success?
3. Do we know which employee groups have the greatest impact on customer satisfaction and retention? On revenue generation? On profitability?
4. How much variation is there from best to weakest performer? What are we doing about that?

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