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Tips for communicating with employees at times of crisis specifically COVID-19

1. People will look to you for trusted information and guidance. They will want information regularly (with timings clearly communicated) – without this they will fill in the blanks and that will lead to speculation and rumours. Use trusted sources to make your decisions, such as NHS, WHO and Public Health England.
2. It's ok to not know the answer to everything but you do need a plan – tell people what you are doing, who is involved and where they can ask questions. You can set up a dedicated email address or a group on one of your internal social networks if you feel it is needed.
3. Make sure everyone knows how, where and when future updates will be provided. It is important that there is a single source of news and updates for the organisation and that everyone knows what this is. Have a clear channel for the communication so that people know where to get correct, accurate and up to date details. Make sure the message is consistent and if you're making changes to the guidance, make it clear where those changes are.
4. Video messages are a great way to communicate messages from your CEO. At times of uncertainty employees like to see updates directly from leaders, it can help bring reassurance and clarity on the organisations approach.
5. This isn't the time to introduce new communication tools or platforms – stick to what people already know and use. Remember traditional channels can be effective such as posters and leaflets, especially in a large operational workforce with hard to reach workers.
6. As part of your Business Continuity Plan, work closely and meet regularly with a core group of managers from across the business ensuring that all decisions are communicated promptly to staff. This should include clarifying working from home policies and plans you have in place, including for those who need to stay at home (self-isolate). A precedent will be set with the first decision so this needs to be a decision that can scale.

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