Engaging employees during challenging times

Caterpillar has made many tough decisions over the last few months. While these decisions have been difficult, they’re also necessary to protect the long-term health of our company. In light of all the changes, leadership and engagement have become increasingly important. Now, more than ever, your employees need to know you’re there. Doing the simple activities below – and doing them right – can have a great impact on your employees and our business.

- **Be visible and involved**
  Be accessible to your employees. They need to be able to interact with you on a daily basis, ask questions and come to you with concerns. This may mean you listen to your employees express pain or sadness. Empathize with them, and, most importantly, really listen.

- **Re-emphasize the mission, vision, values and goals**
  Living Our Values in Action has never been more necessary. Remind your employees that these tough decisions had nothing to do with them or their contributions, but rather, were necessitated by business conditions. Define what your group needs to do to move in the right direction. Help employees create new goals around additional responsibilities.

- **Communicate, ensure understanding and reinforce**
  There’s no such thing as over-communication, especially during these challenging times. In fact, employees must hear a message seven times to remember it. Communicate the facts as honestly as you can. Be compassionate. Help employees realize that the decisions being made are necessary to ensure the long-term health of the company. Dialogue is two-way, and you must ensure you set aside extra time to listen. And if you’re asked a question you don’t have an answer to, do your best to track one down.

- **Keep things regular**
  Continue with your regular group and one-on-one meetings. Sure, it won’t be “business as usual,” but anything you can do with your team to maintain a routine will be beneficial.

- **Chase waste and look to the future**
  Encourage your employees to brainstorm ideas for reducing waste – unnecessary meetings, processes, etc. Map your key processes and reduce, delay or eliminate things that don’t add value. Look to the future. Creativity and innovation are both uplifting and empowering. But driving innovation we also help our employee focus more on the future than the- perhaps difficult- past.
What can I do for myself?

- Maintain your physical health: watch your diet; exercise; limit alcohol; get adequate sleep.
- Build social support. Don't isolate yourself. Talk to others about your experiences.
- Take ownership and accountability when you can. Challenge yourself. Don't minimize your accomplishments. Hardiness and resilience do NOT come from avoiding stress.
- Balance your life in a way that suits you. Know your limits. Detach and set boundaries if needed.
- Focus on what you can control. Don’t live in the future or obsess about the past. Be flexible and avoid catastrophic thinking. Realize that there is no such thing as perfect.
- For your people:
  - Model resilience, optimism and a readiness to tackle adversity. Demonstrate and encourage a work-life balance that best benefits the individual and Caterpillar.
  - Good communication is essential and should be: open, honest, transparent, timely, understood and reinforced. Take care not to overwhelm people with too much information.
  - Be visible. Check in. Ask people how they are doing.
  - Show empathy, flexibility and a willingness to forgive.
  - Teach after failures. Encourage problem-solving. Promote accountability and ownership.
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<tr>
<th><strong>Target Audience</strong></th>
<th><strong>Key needs and messages</strong></th>
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| **Leaders of employees leaving** | • Communication - facts and reality. Clear. Comprehensive but concise.  
• Demonstrate empathy, support, optimism  
• Provide guidance to resources and referrals- EAP, Wellness Services  
• Be supportive through the stages of grief. Psychological first aid. Encourage basic self-care.  
• Workplace violence and other risk management |
| **Leaders of employees retained** | • Clear, honest forward thinking communication  
• Demonstrate empathy. Manage survivor guilt (all forms).  
• Articulate strategy, expectations, future focus  
• Reestablish a sense of team and importance of those remaining  
• Manage risks. Make referrals to resources and referrals. Consider EAP training. |
| **Employees leaving** | • Need to feel understood. Empathy. Negative emotions are to be expected and respected.  
• Ensure adequate resources from HR to understand C+B issues  
• Be optimistic but genuine. Reframe and encourage employees to avoid “getting stuck”  
• Ensure referrals to EAP and supportive services.  
• Manage WPV and other risks. |
| **Employees retained** | • Need clarity of vision and strategy, predictability, stability.  
• Survivor guilt comes in many forms. It must be acknowledged and managed.  
• Need to feel understood, part of a team, valued, needed.  
• Recovery is needed for productivity. Takes time, but may not happen automatically.  
• Job expectations and a sense of accomplishment can aid recovery.  
• Consult with and refer to EAP often. |
Leadership and messaging for exiting employees

- Leader training on communication skills and strategy—right words, right tone, right person
- Creating a supportive environment
- Demonstrating appropriate empathy
- Leader and employee stress management/self-care
- Directing employees to resources and referrals
- Deliver support during exit
- Education on grief/loss, maintaining mental and physical health during crisis
- Encourage problem solving and a future focus.
- Reframing: “don’t stay stuck.”
- EAP as social worker—supporting a broad range of work and social needs
- Establish onsite EAP and other services
- Psychological first aid
- Workplace violence risk mitigation—identifying at risk employees and situations

Leadership and messaging for retained employees

- Empathy, acknowledgement of complex emotions
- Communication skills, incl. transparency and honesty
- Deliver a clear state of business—drive predictability and stability where possible
- Recreating a “sense of team”
- Reinforce employees’ value and accomplishments
- Conveying optimism and honesty
- Encourage peer support
- Building hardiness and resilience
- Leader and employee stress management/self-care
- Managing survivor guilt within an organization
- Articulating a strategy and state clear performance expectations
- Workplace violence prevention—identifying at risk people and situations
- Directing employees to resources and referrals
Leading through Difficult Times