

## Case study – following up a misalignment of understanding

Company A was about to go through a period of immense change. Rumours were rife around the staff that it was about to be closed down. The Director had quite clearly said at the recent manager's conference that some tough decisions had to be made, but that the company did have a future. However, a follow up survey showed that the managers had somehow interpreted what he said differently, or to varying degrees and had therefore failed to cascade accurate messages to their staff.

Business was suffering and they were in danger of turning off good people, who would be the backbone of the new business.

The company was comprehensively reviewing its business and it was already very clear that:

- The changes would be far reaching
- They would be considerably downsizing the business, closing some branches and re-targeting their efforts at a different market in the future
- They would be investing heavily in new products, processes and systems
- For the new business to succeed at all, they had to initiate and successfully achieve a huge cultural change.

The full detail of the changes were not yet clear and no decisions had been made and whilst this wasn't ideal it was important that the rumours of closure were laid to rest and that everyone knew exactly what the current situation was.

There were numerous offices around the country making access to the audience difficult. The Director decided to make a video, to be shown to all staff, which would ensure that everyone got a clear consistent message.

The purpose of the video was to explain the reasons for change, give high-level detail of the changes, and begin to talk about the vision of the future. They wanted to keep the good people on board and make it clear that there would be pain and that they were going to have to change the way they operated for the better – sending a clear signal out to under performers.



The video featured the Director talking straight to camera in various locations. He very clearly stated

- The company had a great future but it had to change
- Why it had to change
- That change would be far reaching
- That it would be difficult and there would be pain
- His vision of the future
- That no decisions had been made
- That he would let everyone know as soon as final decisions had been made

Feedback on the video was very positive, and whilst people obviously wanted to know more, they understood that there was no more to tell at this stage.

Whilst the rumour-mill continued to speculate, there were no longer fears about the business closing down.

People were prepared for the news that followed in that they knew a major change was coming and that it would affect them. They also knew the reasons for the change and understood very well why the change had to happen.

When the final announcement did come 2 months later, there was no need to go into the reasons for change in any great detail, making the announcements much easier to focus on the 'what's in it for me' for the audience.