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Five steps to help manage turbulence

WOMEN AT WORK

Sally Ward

With rapid change and uncertainty a given in today's workplace, engagement and morale often suffer. To help their organizations successfully navigate turbulence, leaders must:

Increase communication. Ambiguity and silence breed feelings of anger and vulnerability. Find out from employees what they need to know, bearing in mind that a good communications plan includes listening. Provide as much information as possible. Step up e-mail or other written updates and be sure to schedule time for live state-of-the-business meetings.

Be present. Get out of the office; walk around and talk with employees. Empathize with the stress they are feeling. Provide encouragement. When asked how he dealt with setbacks, Henry Ford shared the thought that sustained him: "When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it."

Direct attention to the mission: what is being done for whom and why it matters. Help people keep the benefits and results of the organization's services or products front and center. Let them know how they are making a difference. Share stories that inspire pride and purpose.

Focus on several short-term, attainable goals or objectives. This will allow leaders and staff alike to feel like winners at a time when wins are essential to keep morale up.

Celebrate small steps and victories. When threats loom large, everyday efforts and results often go un-remarked. Create an internal culture of acknowledgement and appreciation for the things that are going right. Find vehicles to make successes of every size highly visible. Make it a practice to count the number of times a day that you say thank-you.

To maintain personal resilience through turbulent times, be sure to calendar exercise and take ten to fifteen minutes for quiet time or fresh air each day.

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