



The Cast Communication Design newsletter - May 2011

## Make Time to Make Sense

by Jim Knutsen, Founder and CEO

Last month, after 12 years, I re-branded my business. Boatz Knutsen is now Cast Communication Design.

It was more than a simple name change, of course. It was a refining of our focus and a new way to think about our business. And it's given me the opportunity to practice the principles I preach on the importance of effective internal communication in driving successful change.

I can't say that I nailed all the principles I'd normally recommend that a leader apply in a situation like this, but I can tell you that their importance was affirmed-either through their practice or their (ahem) absence.

I'm more convinced than ever that in times of change, the most important leadership skill is *clarity*. No matter how crazy things feel, you've got to make time to make sense.

Employees respond to change in roughly predictable stages-from denial, concern, and resistance, to openness and, finally, embrace. The first three can cost you money, productivity and morale, so moving employees through them quickly is key.

Based on my own recent experience, I'd put these five steps at the top of your next change communication strategy. And by focusing on providing clarity at every stop along the way, you'll help your employees make sense of what's happening:

## Why the name Cast?

[Read our story](#)

## What's Up at Cast

- **May 24** Founder and CEO Jim Knutsen will be the featured presenter at IABC Philadelphia's "Meaning Matters" event. [Learn more](#)
- **April 21** Sr. Consultant Saunya Peterson spoke to a sold-out crowd at the Ignite Minneapolis event.
- **April 18** Sr. Consultant Katharine Kelly tweeted from the IABC social media conference held at 3M headquarters in St. Paul, Minn.

## Question of the Month

Have you experienced change in your profession that started out negatively but eventually became positive? What turned it around?

[Share your answer on our blog](#)

## Our Services

We design today's internal communication solutions, which includes services in the following areas:

- Research/Audit
- Story Development
- Strategy and Structure

1. **Engage early.** The buzzword is transparency, but it's been overused to the point of near meaninglessness. The practical point is this: When you're planning a change, tell employees about it as early as you can and (to the degree possible) engage them in shaping the change.

2. **Be clear about the process.** Engaging a broad group in helping shape the change doesn't mean it's a democracy. At some point you're going to have to make decisions. What's important is that you're clear about the steps in the process, about where, when and how decisions will be made, and about when you're asking for a voice vs. a vote - this differentiation is critical.

3. **Don't expect everyone to see things like you do.** The context of the leader is not the same as that of her team. You can (and should) *share* your context, but it's not the same as *living* it. Don't be surprised if your team is less (or more) excited... or less (or more) resistant. Take the time to understand where your team is coming from.

4. **Do expect everyone to get on board.** Once the change has been defined, full alignment is key. Be clear about what you need-and *expect*-to see from each member of your team. Ask if they can commit to those behaviors, and hold them accountable.

5. **Mark your progress.** Be deliberate about marking milestones, giving regular updates, and taking the time to celebrate. Let's face it, even when positive, change kinda sucks. It helps to have a little fun along the way.

Remember, when you're leading a change, it's up to you to be the sense-maker. It's not always an easy job, but it's critical to helping employees embrace change.

## From the Blog

### Engagement, Not Authority

by Laura Wegscheid, Sr. Consultant

- Implementation

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Research recently examined by Harvard Business Review found that managers who were redundant in their messages to teams were able to move projects forward more quickly and smoothly than other managers.

That's not so surprising, right? Us communication types are constantly preaching frequent reinforcement of messages: Just when you think you can't bear to say it one more time, you should say it one more time.

But there's a fascinating twist in the plot.

[Read more](#)



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