

Project Defense Summary: Seminar on Improving Communication and Morale at ABC

Organization

Objective:

The seminar aims to address communication breakdowns and low morale at ABC Organization following the dismissal of a staff member due to budget restructuring. The goal is to show transparency, rebuild trust, and create an environment for effective communication during organizational changes, without directly referencing the specific incident.

Structure of the Seminar:

1. Introduction (9:00–9:15 AM):

- Welcome staff and set the tone for the day.
- Emphasize the focus on improving communication, addressing concerns, and building a unified team moving forward.

2. Interactive Activity: “Building Bridges Through Communication” (9:15–10:50

AM):

- **Small Group Discussions (9:30–10:00 AM):**
 - Divide participants into mixed groups (staff and managers) to discuss challenges, communication gaps, and potential solutions using guided questions.
- **Group Presentations (10:00–10:20 AM):**

- Each group presents their concerns and proposed solutions to the larger group.

- **Collaborative Solution-Building (10:20–10:50 AM):**

- The larger group works together to identify common themes and actionable steps to improve communication and morale.

3. **Wrap-Up and Next Steps (10:50–11:00 AM):**

- Summarize key takeaways and outline a formal communication plan based on staff input.

4. **Debriefing Session (11:00–11:30 AM):**

- Reflect on the activity, discuss insights, and identify actionable steps for sustaining effective communication.

5. **Closing Remarks (11:30 AM–12:00 PM):**

- Thank participants, provide certificates of appreciation, and offer contact information for ongoing support.

Proposed Learning Outcomes:

- Improved problem-solving and decision-making skills.
- Enhanced trust, unity, and appreciation for open communication.
- Development of a sustainable communication framework for future changes.

Measuring Success:

- Engagement levels during the activity.
- Quality of proposed solutions.
- Feedback from participants via anonymous surveys and Likert-scale satisfaction scores.

- Observable improvements in communication, trust, and morale in the weeks following the seminar.

Conclusion:

This seminar provides a structured, collaborative approach to addressing communication challenges and rebuilding trust within ABC Organization. By focusing on open dialogue, inclusivity, and actionable solutions, the seminar aims to create a positive and resilient work environment for all staff members.

- 1. In this assignment, you need to imagine you have your own company that specializes in helping organizations during periods of conflict. Your company has been hired to lead a full-day seminar to help rectify a communication issue for ABC, a non-profit organization with 12 staff members that works in helping youth with after-school programs.**

- 2. Read the following scenario:**

Scenario

After establishing the annual budget for the upcoming year, management decided to dismiss Kathy, a junior grant writer/coordinator, from her position, with severance, to facilitate changes for the organization. Reallocating budgets will allow the organization to hire grant consultants for larger proposals and therefore, the organization no longer needs an in-house grant writer.

Kathy had been with the ABC organization for two years. As this was a budget issue, an email was sent to all staff letting them know that Kathy was no longer with the organization due to a

restructuring, but no other explanation or context was given. As a result, there has been a definite shift in morale within the organization.

The four members of the management team are divided on whether to communicate more of an explanation, but feel policy issues prevent it. Conversely, they fear that staff may start looking for new jobs.

The 16 staff members have become very uneasy and now seem quiet and withdrawn. They have not asked any questions, but some were friends with Kathy and do not quite understand what happened. Some fear that they will also be let go due to “restructuring,” and no longer feel they have any job security. Others are upset that Kathy was let go, as she was a loyal and friendly worker.

ABC has hired you to help boost morale and help prevent this kind of scenario from happening again should changes in budget require staff restructuring. Due to legal reasons, you cannot mention Kathy and her situation specifically.

- 3. Create a full-day seminar for staff members to participate in. Your seminar should be structured with an introduction, interactive activity, and debriefing section. Draw upon the case studies and activities through the modules as examples. Your activity should be similar to the ones you have done.**

Seminar Lesson Plan: Improving Communication and Morale at ABC Organization

Introduction

The introduction of the seminar should establish the aim, welcome staff members to participate, and set the right tone. Since legal issues prevent the mention of specific details of why Kathy was let go, there is need to avoid focusing on Kathy's situation, and instead focus on establishing that the goal of the seminar is to solidify communications. For instance, establish that the basis of the seminar is not to dwell on the past but to look forward and create a stronger foundation for the future. Also, there is need to communicate that the goal is to explore how to communicate effectively during times of transition, how to address concerns openly, and how to foster a sense of unity and shared purpose.

Welcome Statement and Acknowledging the Current Environment

Good morning, everyone. Thank you all so much for attending this session. At ABC,

Everyone is a valuable member. All of you contribute immensely to the organizational mission of helping youth with after-school programs. Change is a constant factor in many organizations in the world. Organizations must surely embrace change to remain successful and competitive in the ever-evolving business environment. Indeed, changes within an organization can be unsettling, and even cause anxiety, especially in the context of restructuring, eliminating, modifying, or creating new job positions. Over the next several hours, we'll be engaging in activities and discussions designed to strengthen how we communicate, collaborate, and support one another during times of change. Change is a natural part of any organization's growth, but it can also be challenging. It's normal to feel uncertain or uneasy when changes occur, especially when they impact the team. Today, we'll focus on building a culture of transparency, trust, and open dialogue so that everyone feels heard, valued, and secure in their roles.

Activity: "Building Bridges Through Communication"

Objective:

To improve communication, rebuild trust, and address concerns about job security and organizational changes through structured dialogue and collaborative problem-solving.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

Introduction to the Activity (10 minutes)

Use icebreakers and storytelling to relax the group and increase familiarity and cohesion for more candid engagements. Storytelling can also be used to create shared experiences, connect with the staff, and facilitate embracing of the new changes. Explain the purpose of the activity: to address concerns, practice open communication, and develop solutions collaboratively with the entire staffing team to improve morale and trust. Reaffirm that the activity is not really about

dwelling on specific past events of change, but rather about creating a new change communication framework to result in better communication moving forward.

Divide into Small Groups (5 minutes)

Split the group into 3 groups, each containing 4 participants. Each group should be formed as a mix of staff, and managers (such as 1 manager and 3 staff, per group), to ensure diverse perspectives and views from opposing groups.

Each group activity should be coordinated by a facilitator, or a co-facilitator to ensure that all participants get an equal opportunity to share views. The facilitator, or a co-facilitator will also help minimize conflicts from arising by mediating disagreements, while encouraging open communication.

Group Discussion: Identify Challenges, Issues, and Address the Concerns (30 minutes)

Create a set of leading questions for each group to deliberate on. For example:

1. What are some of the key challenges, or issues that you have experienced during the recent changes witnessed in the workplace?
2. What ideas can you suggest to improve communication, and address the issues you have just raised?
3. What steps do you feel are necessary and would need be prioritized to improve organizational value, build trust, and create a healthy working environment for all?

Group Presentation (20 minutes)

After the successful engagement in each of the 3 groups, each group will be allocated equal timeslots to present their concerns, issues, and suggested solutions to the full, larger group.

During the engagements, my role would be to champion and encourage the larger group to ask for clarification, and add further ideas or build upon ideas presented by each group.

Collaborative Solution-Building (30 minutes)

As the larger group, deliberate on the ideas and categorize the emerging ideas into common themes. Work as the larger group to develop a list of actionable steps that could be implemented to improve communication, boost morale, and build trust. Schedule pre-determined, and regular meetings to address emerging concerns, and discuss on emerging updates and areas for further improvement. Establish a clear communication plan for future changes. Develop a feedback loop whereby staff can anonymously voice concerns and issues, without fear of repudiation.

Wrap-Up and Next Steps (10 minutes)

Create a concise and precise summary of the key takeaways from the group activity. Reaffirm the value of maintaining ongoing consultations, and collaboration. Make the employees, especially the lower level staff, feel valued by integrating their input, and use their input to create a formal communication plan.

Proposed Learning Outcomes

By the end of the activity, all the staff participants should be able to achieve the following learning outcomes:

1. Acquire improved problem-solving skills: Since the participants undertake the activity collaboratively while gathering information, brainstorming ideas, and evaluate each option for relevance and effectiveness, a culture of active and creative thinking will result, encouraging problem-solving and improving decision making.
2. Improved trust, and unity: By working together in teams, of mixed groups (staff working along with managers), the group discussion activity would result in a renewed sense of teamwork, appreciation of diversity, embracing inclusivity, and a shared understanding of common goals.

3. Renewed understanding and appreciation of open communication: By working together in the group discussion activity, the managers and staff appreciate, and recognize the value of honest and transparent communication in sharing ideas, active listening to learn from other's perspectives, and negotiation in reducing conflicts, especially during times of change.
4. Develop a framework for future communication: By engaging in the group discussion activity, the outcome will result in the generation of actionable steps that yield a robust communication framework that encourages a healthy communication between peers across the organization. Further, the resulting communication framework will set the blueprint of the process to be used to inform members regarding impending changes, how to share feedback through appropriate communication channels (such as weekly meetings, check-ins, email, workshops, and online forums), and review schedules.

Debriefing Session

The aim of the debrief session is to allow the participants to reflect on the learning experience during the group learning and seminar, and identify key insights and takeaways that can be used to improve communication between the staff and management.

Discussion Questions:

1. What would you say were the most valuable insights you gained during the learning activity?
2. What would you say is your overall satisfaction level with the learning activity?
3. Are there any challenges or barriers that you feel still need to be addressed?
4. How did stepping into face-to-face engagement with differing roles (management versus staff) change your views regarding conflicts in the workplace?

5. Upon completion of the activity, moving forward, what do you feel are some actionable steps that could ensure effective communication?
6. How can you ensure the actionable steps you mentioned are successfully implemented, and remain sustainable in the long term?

Measuring Success:

- Success will be measured by the level of engagement during the activity, the quality of the proposed solutions, and the participants' feedback during the debriefing session.
- Anonymous feedback forms will be used at the end of the activity, and staff will be required to provide satisfaction scores using a Likert scale for the learning session.
- Additionally, success will be evident in the coming weeks if staff and managers demonstrate improved communication, increased trust, and a more positive work environment.

Seminar Outline with Timelines

Time	Activity	Details
9:00–9:15 AM	Welcome statement and introduction	Explain the purpose of the seminar, while also setting the right tone.
9:15–9:30 AM	Introduce the activity	Explain the “ Building Bridges Through Communication ” activity.
9:30–10:00AM	Small Group Discussions	Small groups debate issues and concerns using guided questions.
10:00–10:20 AM	Group Presentations	Each group presents their key concerns and solutions, one group at a time.
10:20–10:50 AM	Collaborative Solution-Building	The larger group work to create feasible and actionable solutions.

Time	Activity	Details
10:50–11:00 AM	Wrap-Up and Next Steps	Create a summary outline of the key insights, and outline next steps.
11:00–11:30 AM	Debriefing Session	Take time to reflect on learning outcomes, and establish a means to measure the success rate.
11:30 AM–12:00 PM	Closing Remarks	Give a token of appreciation to participants such as a thank you note, or certificate of appreciation. Make closing remarks, and provide contact information for the participants to reach out to for ongoing dialogue.