



Launch Lead Live: The Executive's Guide to Preventing Resistance and Succeeding with Organizational Change

Turning a Typical Town hall Meeting into a Guided Conversation

Tom is the CEO of a large, privately held financial services company. The company recently made the decision to merge with another local financial services company. The merger will expand the company's market share, decrease both companies' financial risks, and create new opportunities for the employees. The merger will also result in some employees of both companies losing their jobs.

The guided conversation technique will be used to announce the merger at the planned town hall meeting. He begins by shifting his thinking from making a presentation to having a conversation with his employees. He recognizes that unlike a presentation, a conversation is an interchange of information --- people talk about the topic, listen, and generate new insights or understanding.

He knows that to be successful with this merger, a series of conversations will be needed. The purpose of this first conversation is to create employee awareness about the need and intended outcome of the merger. He thinks about the information the employees will need to actively participate in the conversation, and the best way to provide the information and allow the conversation to unfold. He also wants his employees to understand that their conversation is not about making a decision – the companies will merge—it's about increasing their understanding about the change.

He decides he will open the conversation with the story of why the organization needed to merge, the intent of the merger, how the merger company was selected/identified, and the consequences if they did not actively seek a merger.

Tom knows just asking if the employees have any questions at the end of the presentation won't stimulate conversation. It may actually increase



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anxiety and uncertainty about the change. He prepares four open-ended questions as conversation starters.

1. What were you thinking about as I described the need for the merger?
2. What do you believe about the opportunities and benefits in this merger?
3. What are you most afraid of losing through this merger?
4. What are most excited about gaining through this merger?

Tom pauses at natural points in his story to ask a question using one of his conversation starters and encourage a flow of conversation. He concludes the conversation, leaving open the opportunity for further conversation.