Each time you share new information with your team, emphasize "why," not just "what"

Why do it?

When you're a manager, the way you share information can mean the difference between your direct reports diving into their work with a sense of purpose, and shrugging and saying, "So what?" Whether you're setting new goals, revising expectations, or communicating a company change, it's critical to paint a clear picture of *why* something is happening. If your direct reports understand the context of the situation, not only will they be much more likely to feel invested in the new course of action, but also they'll be better equipped to contribute their own insights, ideas, and improvements to it.

"I suppose you're all wondering why I've asked you here..."

How to do it:

1. Write out what's happening, why, and what it will mean for your team moving forward.

Organize your thoughts by listing things like how the decision was made, any pros and cons that informed the decision, the major implications on your team's work, and any other context you're able to share.

2. Include the reasons why it's happening when you first deliver the news to your team — don't wait.

If you wait until later to explain why something new is happening, your team will have already formed a response to it. And if that response is negative, it can be hard to recover from. For example:

- Poor: *"I just got out of a meeting with the department heads. We're going to stop working on our website redesign and help Maya's team with the payments platform. She'll let you know more about that in Monday's meeting."*
- Better: *"I just got out of a meeting with the department heads, and we agreed that, in order to make our revenue goal this quarter, it makes sense to put our website redesign on hold until we've successfully implemented the new payments platform. And since Maya's team is understaffed with Karl on paternity leave, we're going to team up to get it done quickly. Then, we'll get back to fleshing out the redesign ideas we came up with last week. In the meantime, I've scheduled a meeting with Maya to walk through what she'll need from each of us."*

3. After sharing the news, ask your team, "What questions or concerns do you have at this point?"

Anything new is bound to draw questions from your team and, depending on your situation, even challenges, confusion, or emotional reactions. Inviting your team's input will help them process the new information and gain clarification on points you may not have thought to share. In your answers, do your best to allay any anxieties (*"I understand why you're concerned, but…"*) and address every question, even if you don't know the answer yet (*"Thanks for bringing that up. I'll need some time to look into it and will give you an update tomorrow."*).

4. Follow up and keep the lines of communication open.

It can take some time for your team to digest the new information and/or begin implementing it. Explain how you plan to follow up (for example, whether you'll check in on the new team goal during team meetings, or if you'll gauge how everyone is doing individually in 1-on-1s). And continue to reinforce the "why" in those follow-up conversations.

More on communicating change with your team:

- [A communication checklist](#) [How to communicate change to your team](#)
- [What to do if you're skeptical of a company change](#)