



# Changing Times Demand Positive Leadership!

## A Special Report - 2016

Available as a conference keynote  
or in-house presentation



**CAROLE  
SPIERS  
GROUP**

International Stress Management &  
Employee Wellbeing Consultancy

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**We are living in a changing world in which uncertainty is endemic and where there is an imperative for leaders to be visible, available and above all to be able to communicate openly with their workforce, at every level throughout the organisation. It is during these times that it is vital for you to be able to offer your teams a focus that is clear and an anchor that is strong.**

Organisational change can range from a simple process to a major strategic policy review. Whatever it is, there will be a need for strong leadership that will be an exemplar of determined action that motivates and inspires the workforce. Individuals and teams will seek direction, purpose and most importantly, reassurance and confidence.

### **Don't Get Swept Away**

Change brings uncertainty. However, it affects everyone differently. The challenge facing leaders and managers is that different people take dissimilar timescales to arrive at the acceptance point of change.

Emotions may well run high but it is the leadership role to stand apart from emotional responses and to concentrate on the situational facts. Employees will seek direction and reassurance and managers will need to understand the differing impact that change can have upon individuals. No two people will be affected identically and reactions will differ accordingly. It is essential to appreciate these fundamental facts in order to manage change effectively. For some, change can be an opportunity whilst for others it can, or can appear to be, a restriction on career advancement or possibly an increased workload with no commensurate increase in pay. The latter individual or group may actively resist the actual change implemented or just accept it with extreme reluctance.

*"Leaders need to lead"*

### **Where to Focus Support**

Individuals can easily be influenced by negative behaviour, but if actively encouraged to take part in the change in working, they will eventually see the benefits. However, it is important to remember that not everyone has to embrace change in order for it to be effective.

### **Building Resilience is Key**

Under pressure, the need for resilience grows and it is important that pressure is managed well so that there isn't the opportunity for it to turn into stress. If people are uncomfortable about change, they will show signs and symptoms of work stress. These can include - changes in mood or behaviour; irritability or anger; poor time-keeping; reduced levels of productivity; absenteeism; making negative comments and/or low morale.

*"Thrive under pressure"*

If you see these or any other changes in the behaviour of individual members of your team, they are the people you need to focus on. However, it is essential that they concentrate on aspects that are within their control and don't expend energy and time on matters that are not within their remit to change.



Your team members need to be taught how to reinforce their own personal resilience so that they are in a strong position to manage the challenges ahead of them. Resilience training can help, not only to bring people together, but also to give the skills necessary to make them more flexibly robust so they can survive and thrive.

*“You need to learn to live with the ‘New Normal’”*

### **Before You Talk, Start by Listening**

The best communicators are the best listeners. Set aside a regular time to talk to your team, either en bloc or individually. Make sure you listen to what is said to you as opposed to just hearing the words. Ask focused, open questions and, having asked the questions, wait long enough to listen and evaluate the answers.



To actively listen means to show empathy and, in order to do this, you need to reflect the feelings that the speaker articulates. In this context, matching the non-verbal behaviour and reading the body language of the speaker will help to build rapport. Watch out for any disconnect between what the speaker says and his/her body language.

*“Active Listening is an art and can be taught”*

If there are difficult conversations to be entered into, then don't avoid them by procrastination. Plan the conversation in advance so that you can manage it with the required sensitivity plus knowledge and understanding of the issue(s).

Establishing rapport with your employees on a one-to-one basis is a skill that creates the foundation for successful management, whilst also providing the opportunity to give reassurance.

### **Communicating Outside the Bubble**

It is, unfortunately, all too easy to become isolated within your own 'bubble' and to only engage fully at your own management level, albeit inter-departmentally. However, interacting efficiently with everyone within your own team is imperative to maintain morale and productivity.

Team members and individuals will want to know where they are going and what you need them to do differently in order for them to get there. They will feel both valued and secure simply because you keep them informed. It will demonstrate that you trust them and that they are regarded as members of the 'work family unit'. And that is important.

### **Moving the Team Forward**

Always try to involve everyone affected by the proposed changes through consultation, wherever possible. Then, hopefully, the design and implementation of revised methods of working will reflect the concerns of those impacted. How change affects individuals and how it affects the organisation is critical information that needs to be taken into account throughout the change management process.

*"Keep employees updated"*

### Gaining Buy-in

Particularly in times of uncertainty, employees need reassurance, stability and focus and to feel that they are valued and needed. Therefore, you need to sell your message and your sales pitch needs to be persuasive in order to have impact. But in order for you to enlist support, you will need to demonstrate that you are very aware of the importance of collaborative effort in implementing the proposed changes.

*"Your sales pitch needs to be persuasive to have impact"*

### Grow Your People to Deliver Outcomes

During periods of change, challenges may multiply but there are decisions to be made as to who will become the key differentiators to deliver results. Encourage attitudes such as - being able to respond to changed conditions; engagement and desire to deliver outstanding performance; and appreciating that some behaviours need modifying whilst others need accentuating to achieve successful outcomes. Enabling such mind-sets will also help determine the potential future leaders who can take the organisation forward.

### Focusing Your Time

It is all too easy to get distracted by unimportant activities that don't add any real value to the organisation. During times of uncertainty and change, this is the time to concentrate 100% upon the tasks in hand and not get distracted. Time is a depreciating asset that will flow past you unless you use it to your advantage and then it can become an appreciating asset. In the time it has taken you to read this article, an entrepreneur somewhere will have made a decision to invest in a project that will return his investment many times in the months ahead – but only because he made that decision. Sounds obvious? Yes, it does! But we all tend to prevaricate when we should be decisive. However, in order to be in that position, we need to be knowledgeable and that means being in possession of the facts. Being in possession of the facts requires efficient communication – interpersonal communication with all those who are participants in any course of action that comes about as a result or product of organisational change.

### Focus on the Positive

However, be careful regarding what you claim, as the temptation to manipulate facts to prove your case can be overpowering. At the other end of the scale, don't just assume that everyone is already aware of all the facts and that they don't really need convincing of anything at all.

Now is the time for leaders to ensure that meetings are not only frequent enough to disseminate information as it becomes available but that such meetings are inclusive and not exclusive. Delivering a clear message and focusing on the positive is an imperative, because failure to do so can result in the information void being filled with often damaging rumour and conjecture that can spread like wildfire. Be careful of knee-jerk reactions which can result in Chinese whispers abounding, with comments on contentious subjects like job losses and pay freezes.



*“Be careful of knee-jerk reactions”*

### Set an Example

Be a role model! Integrity is paramount during times of change and this is the time to exhibit the passion you have for the way forward. As passion is infectious, the chances are that it will be passed on down the line of command.

Both your own team and everyone else in the company are likely to be watching your reactions and your contribution to the changes required. Openness and honesty will be respected, whilst exaggeration and hyperbole are to be avoided. Most people can see the difference between facts and a contrived scenario constructed merely to placate anxieties. It is easy to focus on areas that will strike a chord with your team, but doing so without justification can mean that facts are omitted, distorted, or even fabricated.

### Talk to your Customers and Clients

Be proactive and speak to your customers or clients to provide solutions to their current challenges – remembering to focus on their agenda - not on your own! They will be reassured to hear from you and will welcome having an open and candid conversation. If essential communication skills are lacking, then they must be acquired through quality training.

*“Not everyone is a natural communicator”*

### The Time is Now!

Adaptation of existing skills and utilisation of new skills and different ways of working may well be needed in order to meet revised circumstances and new challenges ahead.

It is vital that the leaders of today and tomorrow understand the psychology of uncertainty and the inevitability of change - and learn to accept and deal positively with it. Managing uncertainty is a skilled art, but once control measures are introduced and teams are on board the bus, it will drive faster and more efficiently to arrive at its destination – maybe even ahead of schedule!

As a leader, you have to engage and motivate your teams. Projecting a positive attitude and mind-set will lift morale. Reinforcing relationships with your teams, together with those of your clients and customers, will be vital.

You may not have all the answers for the future – none of us have and it is not wrong to ask for help if you need it. This is not the time to think that you can be all things to all people. Know your strengths, but be aware of the support that you might need to meet the challenges ahead.

Change affects everyone and it is for you as an exemplar to reflect the published values and culture of the organisation - in every way, every day. And to do so, you must be authentic and believable. The positive action demanded by changing times is your responsibility.

## The 3Cs to Manage Uncertainty

- **Communicate effectively**
- **Co-operate and engage with all parties**
- **Consider the impact upon those affected**

## 10 Key Action Points

1. Employ consultation prior to the implementation of change
2. Involve everyone – look out for those who may feel isolated
3. Ensure your message is transparent and unambiguous
4. Gain buy-in for the changes from those directly involved
5. Regularly assess the impact of change upon the organisation
6. Intervene decisively but be careful of knee-jerk reactions
7. Focus on your client or customer's needs – not on yours!
8. Avoid distractions by being disciplined and goal-focused
9. Walk-the-talk to communicate more effectively
10. Motivate and inspire your team to reinforce your vision for the future



## The Author

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## Leading Authority on Work Stress and Change Management

As CEO of the Carole Spiers Group, Carole has twenty years' experience as a top industry expert on work stress and change management and is in a unique position to advise on current business challenges.

She is a sought-after motivational business speaker in both the UK and internationally and is a well-respected authority on building resilience to minimise workplace stress. Showing leaders how to sustain the values and culture of an organisation during times of change, such as BREXIT, is an integral part of her philosophy.

Her major focus is on developing inspirational leadership by exploiting the power of effective communication. As a popular BBC guest broadcaster, she is the media's first choice for comment on work-related stress and organisational change. Her proven initiatives show senior management everywhere how to profit from a healthy workplace culture.

Carole is the best-selling author of *Show Stress Who's Boss!* translated into Arabic for sale in the Middle East. As the current Chair of the UK branch of ISMA, the International Stress Management Association, Carole, on their behalf, established National Stress Awareness Day as an annual event. She is also Past President of the London Chapter of the Professional Speaking Association and can be found on Wikipedia - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carole\\_Spiers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carole_Spiers).

Learn how to build personal resilience and how to enhance your communication skills in Carole's new motivational presentation:

**'Changing Times Demands Positive Leadership!'**

This programme is available as a conference keynote or in-house presentation.

Contact us now!

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