



MANITOBA TRUCKING ASSOCIATION

25 Bunting Street Winnipeg, Manitoba R2X 2P 5

# MANAGING UNCERTAINTY

Leading a trucking company through uncertainty—whether due to economic downturns, regulatory changes, or supply chain disruptions—requires balancing transparency, stability, and values-driven decision-making.

Employees look to leadership for reassurance and direction but sharing too much or too little information can create unnecessary anxiety or erode trust. Leaders must ask themselves critical questions to navigate uncertainty while maintaining morale and operational efficiency.

## How Much Should You Share with Employees?

Transparency is essential in building trust, but it requires careful consideration. Leaders should ask themselves:

- **What do employees need to know to do their jobs effectively?** Providing clear updates on issues affecting operations—such as fuel price fluctuations, customer demand changes, or new compliance requirements—helps employees stay informed without overwhelming them.
- **Will sharing this information reduce uncertainty or create more anxiety?** While honesty is key, excessive detail about financial struggles or industry volatility may create unnecessary fear.
- **How can I frame the information constructively?** Present challenges alongside potential solutions. For instance, instead of saying, “Freight volumes are down, and we might have to cut hours,” say, “Freight volumes are fluctuating, and we’re exploring ways to maintain stability, including securing new contracts.”
- **Are my messages consistent?** Contradictory information damages credibility. Ensure messages align across leadership and are delivered in a timely manner.

## How Can You Make Employees Feel Assured?

In uncertain times, employees need to feel secure in their roles and within the organization. Leaders should consider:

- **Am I listening to my employees’ concerns?** Create open forums for employees to ask questions and express worries. Regular safety meetings, one-on-one check-ins, or anonymous feedback channels help gauge morale.
- **How can I reinforce job security where possible?** While no business can guarantee indefinite stability, providing

reassurances about company efforts to retain staff—such as pursuing new business opportunities or improving operational efficiencies—can help.

- **Am I maintaining a visible leadership presence?** Remote decision-making can create a disconnect. Being present at terminals, riding along with drivers, or holding town halls shows commitment and accessibility.
- **Are my actions reinforcing a culture of safety?** Safety concerns extend beyond financial stability. Reinforce policies that protect drivers physically and mentally, ensuring they have resources for stress management and work-life balance.

## How Do You Ensure Values Are Maintained During Tough Decisions?

Hard decisions—such as layoffs, restructuring, or adjusting pay structures—must align with company values. Leaders should reflect on:

- **Are we treating employees with respect and fairness?** If tough decisions become necessary, consider alternative solutions first, such as reduced hours, voluntary leaves, or cross-training employees for other roles.
- **Does this decision align with our long-term goals?** Short-term cost-cutting should not compromise safety, quality service, or ethical employment practices.
- **How can I communicate difficult decisions with empathy?** Employees deserve honest, respectful explanations. Providing context, acknowledging impact, and offering support (such as job placement assistance) can ease the transition.
- **How do we preserve our company culture?** Reinforce your core values in day-to-day interactions. Recognizing hard work, offering professional development, and maintaining an open-door policy can sustain morale even during challenges.

Managing uncertainty is a defining test of leadership. By balancing transparency with reassurance, ensuring employees feel secure, and making tough decisions through a values-driven lens, trucking company leaders can navigate uncertainty while maintaining trust and resilience.

*Tory McNally, CPHR, BSc., Vice President, Professional Services is a human resource consultant, radio personality, and problem solver. She can be reached at [tory@legacybowes.com](mailto:tory@legacybowes.com)*

Funding provided by:

The Government of Canada

The Manitoba Government