

Building resilience during and
after the COVID-19 pandemic



COVID-19 guide & action checklist



For garment factories & managers

Communicating with your workers

This guide helps factory managers establish and maintain good internal communications practice for a more responsive and productive factory environment during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Getting started



Includes:
Action
checklist

In this guide:

- ▶ COVID-19 and the importance of internal communication
- ▶ A better factory operation and workplace
- ▶ Key steps to maintaining good communications practice



1. COVID-19 and the importance of internal communication

The COVID-19 crisis makes it especially important for you to communicate with your workers early and often. During this uncertain time, people may be anxious about their health, future or about changes in the workplace. You might find that people are more stressed or upset than normal, and it is easy for misinformation to circulate. Poor internal communication can therefore negatively impact your business by leading to inefficiency, tension, and anxiety.

Critical for managing the current crisis and responding to changes quickly



In addition to communicating with your workers on a regular basis, it is important for your workers to feel comfortable and safe communicating with you. Understanding your workers' concerns and suggestions early on will have a big impact on how quickly and effectively you can address the situation. This will help you address small issues before they become big issues.

Maintaining good communication with your workers during and after the COVID-19 pandemic can:

- ▶ Make the workplace safer
- ▶ Help curb the spreading of rumours or inaccurate information
- ▶ Reduce misunderstanding and conflicts
- ▶ Improve workers/managers understanding of the changes that may need to be taken in the factory and the rationale behind key decisions
- ▶ Give workers and managers a sense of being included and committed when dealing with COVID-19
- ▶ Improve production quality and efficiency.



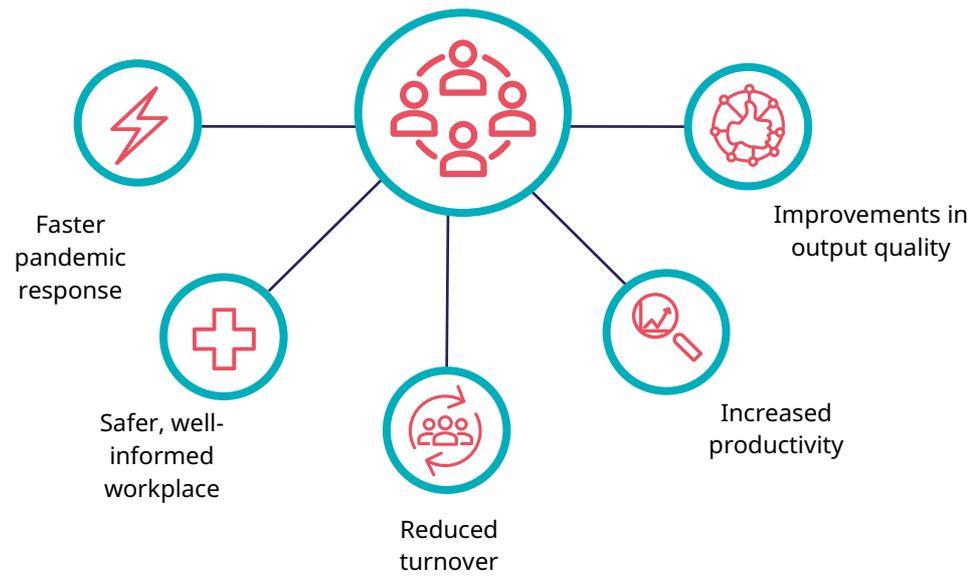
2. A better factory operation and place of work

Good internal communication is not only critical for managing the current crisis, but it can also help your business respond to changes soon and improve your operations on a long-term basis. This includes reducing turnover, increasing productivity and improvements in output quality - all of which, leads to better business outcomes for the factory.

Moreover, supporting good two-way communication between factory managers and workers is an effective way to support a better working environment and improve relations in your workplace.



Key benefits of establishing and maintaining good internal communications practice:



3. Getting ready for action

Now that we've reviewed the key benefits of maintaining good communications practice in your factory operation, the following steps can help improve your factory's internal communication during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.



Building resilience during and after the COVID-19 pandemic



6 steps garment factories can take to improve workplace communications

- 01 Determine who you need to communicate with**
List the key individuals and groups who should be kept informed
- 02 Determine what to communicate**
Identify information that needs to be conveyed to your audience
- 03 Determine how you will communicate**
Use the appropriate delivery channels to share information
- 04 Make sure you communicate clearly**
Be honest, calm and transparent
- 05 Communicate your support**
Be attentive and responsive to the needs of your workers
- 06 Learn and prepare for what's next**
Improve upon and maintain communications long-term





Putting the measures in action: Factory checklist

1. Determine who you need to communicate with

The first step in improving your internal communication is to consider who you need to communicate with in the factory. Common stakeholders in garment factories include different types of worker groups (helpers, sewers, cleaners, cooks, managers) as well as workplace committees like safety committees, workers' representatives and unions.

Action	Ease of implementation	Timeline	Check
Make a list of which groups of stakeholders you need to communicate with during this crisis.		Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider how information might impact each subgroup differently (women, pregnant women, migrants, and persons with disabilities).		Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Determine what you will communicate

Secondly, ensure you have a clear idea of what information you need to communicate. There will be a lot of new information you will need to communicate in your factory due to changes arising from the COVID-19 crisis. Some things that you may need to inform you workers about include:

- ▶ Recommendations on hygiene measures (e.g. handwashing, wearing masks, etc.) and social-distancing practices in the workplace.
- ▶ Procedures for what to do when workers or their family members get sick.
- ▶ Informing workers what sick leave benefits are available to those who have COVID-19 or symptoms like COVID-19, and how workers can avail these benefits.
- ▶ Informing workers how the factory is being disinfected.
- ▶ Informing workers of new customers, orders, and deadlines.

Action	Ease of implementation	Timeline	Check
Identify what you need to communicate, i.e. temporary changes in factory practices, social distancing measures or new orders.		Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Validate information beforehand to ensure that what you are communicating is accurate. Do you know for a fact that what you are communicating is true, or is it a rumour?		Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make sure that your information is ready to be communicated. Is everything in place if you plan to introduce a new practice or policy? For example, if you are planning to announce a new policy on handwashing procedures, make sure you have enough soap and sinks available so that once your policy is announced you can immediately implement it.		Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider the impact of your communication on workers. Think through questions or issues that they may have. Be proactive so that you are prepared to answer them.		Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
For bigger announcements, such as a temporary reduction of factory operations, you can reach out internally to different groups in the factory to get their reactions beforehand. This will help you understand the perspective of your workers better and it can help you come up with suitable messages to communicate.		Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Determine how you will communicate

Effective communication involves communicating in a manner that is well suited to the receiver and that is appropriate to use to communicate your intended message.

Common methods of communicating in a factory include signs, notice boards, educational posters, line meetings, workplace committees, announcements attached to payslips, informal conversations, public address systems, walking around, labour unions, and training and workshops.

Action	Ease of implementation	Timeline	Check 
<p>Carefully consider which delivery channels are best for different groups in your factory. This includes groups such as pregnant women, migrants, and those with disabilities that may need different channels of communication. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Can the receivers of the information speak your language? Can they read? ▶ Will they have childcare or transportation issues? ▶ Do they have other obligations outside of work that may impact whether they can receive your communication? 	✓✓	 Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Ensure you provide your workers with communication channels through which they can share feedback, ask question or express their concerns with you.</p>	✓✓	 Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Strengthen or set up new channels of communication. This could include workers committees, suggestion boxes, regular meetings, announcements on the PA system, posters, and more.</p>	✓✓	 Mid-term	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Make sure that you communicate clearly

When it is time to communicate with your workers, you need to be clear, calm and transparent. You should seek to build trust with your workers and improve two-way communication. This includes remaining open-minded to the concerns that may be expressed by your workers during the delivery of your communication.

Action	Ease of implementation	Timeline	Check 
<p>Be honest and clear in your communication. In some countries, it is important not to lose face in front of your workers. Bearing this in mind, try to be as transparent as you can. Do not make statements or promises that are not completely true.</p>	✓✓✓	 Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Stay calm and patient. During a crisis, you may have to communicate messages to your workers that is going to make them upset. Try not to be angry with them and avoid using offensive or rude language or behaviour if this happens.</p>	✓✓	 Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Communication should be two-ways. Take time to actively listen to what your workers are communicating with you.</p>	✓✓	 Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Be aware of how you communicate, make eye contact, do not speak quickly and consider your body language.</p>	✓✓	 Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Communicate your support

Remember that your actions are also a form of communication. The COVID-19 pandemic may take a severe toll on your factory as well as the personal lives of your workers. This is a time to act in solidarity, build trust, and overcome this crisis together.

Action	Ease of implementation	Timeline	Check ✓
Demonstrate that you are available to hear concerns through different channels of communication. This includes reminding workers of existing grievance mechanism systems, regularly reviewing comment boxes, and meeting regularly with workers' representatives.	✓✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use handout signs, notice boards, posters, line meetings, workplace committees, announcements attached to payslips, conversations, public address systems, unions, and other channels to reaffirm your commitment to support workers during this crisis.	✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Be responsive to the concerns raised by your workers and adapt procedures as is appropriate.	✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Learn and prepare for what's next

Lastly, try to learn throughout this crisis as well as afterwards. While the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic might be unparalleled in your company's history, the risk of future crises will remain, so it is important to learn lessons from the current experience to build long-term resilience.

Action	Ease of implementation	Timeline	Check ✓
Write down what you communicated well and what you could have improved in your communication during and after the COVID-19 outbreak.	✓✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop a factory resilience strategy and plan. Ensure that you consider communication when preparing this document and incorporate lessons learnt from the situation that you faced during COVID-19.	✓✓	»»» Short-term	<input type="checkbox"/>



This guide was developed by the ILO Enterprises department for the **Decent Work in the Garment Sector Supply Chains in Asia** project, funded by the Government of Sweden.



For more guides and resources to help you navigate the global COVID-19 pandemic, visit:

▶ ilo.org/covid19

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