

# Navigating Economic Headwinds

*Best Practices for Manufacturers to Effectively Communicate in Uncertain Times*

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## Clear Communication is More Important Than Ever

The global manufacturing sector is navigating a dynamic landscape marked by fluctuating costs, supply chain complexities, and evolving trade policies. In this environment, effective and strategic communication is critical to maintain stability and foster trust with stakeholders.

In times of uncertainty, clarity and honesty build resilience. Before communicating internally and externally, companies must first understand their own challenges and define their strategy to adapt. This includes clearly identifying and acknowledging potential impacts on your business and then defining the steps your organization is taking to manage challenges, optimize operations, and ensure continuity.

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## One Message Does Not Fit All

Effective communication recognizes that different stakeholders have distinct information needs and concerns. Tailored messages foster understanding, trust, and alignment.

### Internal Audiences

Your employees are your most vital ambassadors and require clear, consistent communication to remain aligned and confident.

- Provide candid, frequent updates on business performance, operational changes and the company's strategic response to market conditions.
- Equip managers with internal FAQs, talking points, and other materials to support delivery of accurate information and a cohesive company message.

### External Audiences

Maintain strong relationships with your customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders with thoughtful, audience-specific engagement.

- **Customers:** Focus messaging on continuity and solutions. Clearly explain any potential impacts on product availability, service delivery, or lead times. Offer actionable alternatives or incentives where possible. Empower sales and account management teams with current, comprehensive details and messaging to proactively address customer concerns.
- **Suppliers:** Encourage collaboration by maintaining an open dialogue. Identify shared challenges and align on expectations for supply chain dynamics and operational adjustments in the spirit of partnership.
- **Investors & Stakeholders:** Offer consistent updates on overall business health, strategic adaptations, and long-term outlook. Communicate regularly and transparently, sharing a clear plan to navigate economic shifts that is supported by data-driven insights.

# Use Channel Diversity to Amplify Your Voice

Deploy an integrated approach to effectively and consistently reach relevant audiences where they are.

- **Digital Platforms:** Utilize your website for dedicated sections on market updates, FAQs, and contact points for specific concerns. Leverage targeted digital marketing (e.g., LinkedIn, programmatic advertising) to highlight your adaptive strategies and commitment to customers.
- **Direct Engagement:** Prioritize personalized outreach through account managers, customer service teams, and direct email campaigns for critical updates and relationship-building.
- **Industry Presence:** Actively engage with industry groups and associations to share insights, reassure customers, and seek opportunities to share helpful information by speaking at major industry events.
- **Media Relations:** Develop relationships with key trade publications and business media. Consider issuing press releases on strategic initiatives or contributing thought-provoking op-eds to shape industry dialogue and reinforce your leadership position.

## Strategies for an Agile Communications Strategy

- Stay informed with robust media and policy monitoring to track global trade developments, economic indicators, and industry news.
- Treat communications as an ongoing process, updating messaging to reflect the latest market conditions and your company's evolving responses.
- Plan for various potential economic scenarios to enable rapid and consistent messaging and response when conditions shift.
- Foster cross-functional alignment with internal “tiger teams” across communications, supply chain, operations, and other relevant departments to support a cohesive communication strategy.

### It's Not Too Late to Get Started

In a complex world, clear and thoughtful communication is your most powerful tool. By adapting these strategic communications principles for your audiences and specific business and industry challenges, manufacturing companies can not only navigate current uncertainties but also emerge stronger, reinforcing trust and partnership.

## Key Takeaways

- ✓ **Clarity comes first.** Before communicating internally and externally, assess your company's challenges and define your strategy to adapt.
- ✓ **Tailor messaging and communications to your different audiences to speak more directly to their concerns and foster understanding, trust, and alignment.**
- ✓ **Amplify your messaging with a diverse range of channels to reach relevant audiences wherever they are.**
- ✓ **Stay vigilant with an agile strategy to sustain and evolve communications as needed.**

## Interested in learning more? Schedule a brainstorm today.

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