



to play, and what other changes might be coming. As NTEU has repeatedly requested from the agency since the commencement of TABS, it is critical that, regardless of the underlying changes the agency envisions, our employees understand their roles and responsibilities, know the processes and procedures that are available to them to engage their work, and have the appropriate resources, including training, to accomplish their work.

So, where are we in that endeavor? OCHCO is developing a Change Management Initiative. Following on the heels of Project Aim, which is now in its implementation stage, the Change Management initiative is being developed to address the “people” part of change. It hopes to communicate tools that not only our managers can use to address the uncertainties of change, but also for our employees as they address these uncertainties as well. Having the tools to deal with change, however, does not negate our employees’ need to understand their roles and responsibilities, the processes and procedures available to them to engage their work, and the appropriate resources, including training, to accomplish their work.

However, the increased churn draws our attention to two key issues that continually come up when NTEU meets with our bargaining unit employees: first, the continuing lack of trust in leadership; and second, employees’ concern that they are not getting the information they really need to make appropriate decisions about their careers.

Regardless of the high quality of the Change Management Sharepoint site, employees are not, for the most part, going to go to a website to search for tools to deal with change. And that is not because our employees are lazy. To the contrary, our employees are eager for transparent and effective communications; they are eager for dialogue with their managers; and they are eager for answers. They are also tired of what they perceive as less than forthcoming communications, buzzwords, and being told by their leaders that they should think of themselves as empowered while it is demonstrated to them that they are not. In other words, they are eager to be treated as the agency’s “most important resource.”

The more uncertain and, dare I say, chaotic, our work situation becomes, the more our employees need good lines of communication. What NTEU has witnessed over the last two weeks is that some of the additional uncertainty that has developed has been caused by ineffective communication.

The rumor mill is churning because when employees are nervous, worried, and pressured, they have increased information needs. Our employees deserve to know what’s really going on and what is being planned for the future. If our leadership and managers don’t supply these answers to them, they will make up their own. Often, they will imagine the worst, when in fact, there may be very good reasons for hope and optimism. While the EDO Update a couple weeks ago, was honest about the potential for a RIF, it left most employees wondering what that really means for them and their organization.

In an environment where trust is paramount, our leadership and managers must realize how important and necessary good communication is in coping with the stress of major organizational change at the NRC and that the lines of communication must be honest, sincere and respectful.

I’d like to turn NTEU’s comments to our bargaining unit employees. NTEU wants to remind you that one of the worst things you can do when you are experiencing the stress of change is to pretend everything is “just fine.” Even if you agree intellectually that changes are necessary,

emotionally you still may have some painful, negative reactions to deal with. Don't ignore these. Speak with your managers, use resources such as the Employee Assistance Program, come speak with us in the union office or send us an email. We need, as an organization, as a community, to work together.

Research indicates that acknowledging your negative feelings may actually improve your ability to remain upbeat and optimistic! When you're willing to look at all sides of your agency's changes, your ability to notice the positives, as well as the negatives, improves. Then you can choose to focus on the positives, rather than dwell on the negatives. What I am trying to say is that if you force yourself to tell yourself the whole truth, you'll see both the positive and negative aspects of any major change. This expanded perspective alone will almost always help you feel more positive and upbeat, without having to deny your feelings to the contrary.

Finally, during times of change, it is common to let yourself and others be easily abused. When you see your colleagues experience actions that appear unfair, there is a natural tendency to wonder if you might be next. NTEU has heard that this is, in some instances, creating a chilled environment. Our mission is too important to allow this to happen. As NRC employees, it is our sworn duty to uphold the NRC mission to protect the public health and safety and the environment. As NRC employees, our values support the importance of a questioning attitude. At the NRC, questioning decisions, policies, or personnel actions, is appropriate and should be supported.

NTEU's focus is on your working environment. We encourage you, as NRC employees to tactfully broach concerns about yourself or your colleagues, with your immediate supervisors, when possible. Yes, there is always a risk when you make such a move you could be targeted as a troublemaker. We have seen this in several of the grievances filed over the last year. But if you truly have the agency's interests at heart, you or you with NTEU's support, may be able to negotiate a more fair and humane work environment for all concerned.

And finally, as the holiday season approaches, don't ignore your family and friends. In addition to maintaining time for yourself, it's also important not to forget your family and friends. Spouses, children, other family members, and dear friends, can be excellent sources of emotional support when times are tough at work.

In conclusion, NTEU would like to take this opportunity to wish our NRC family a very blessed and healing holiday season and a New Year filled with dignity and respect for all NRC employees as we engage the challenges ahead of us!

Thank you.