



Controlling Workplace Rumors

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The spread of misinformation can often be more damaging to a company than any real crisis. This is especially important in smaller organizations, where workplace rumors can cause enough concern and insecurity that morale and productivity suffers, and your best employees may decide they'd be better off working elsewhere. Rumors may even be passed along to customers and competitors, damaging your position in the marketplace. Your best approach is to be proactive.

Use the following tips to stop rumors before they start:

- What employees are not told, they invent, so tell them what's going on before their imaginations take over.
- Honesty acts on a rumor like water acts on a fire. You can slash the grapevine back with the truth—even if the truth is not always good news.
- If things are changing, keep the workforce informed at every stage. This will help employees feel like an important part of the process and avoid panic.
- Avoid closed doors. They're a sure sign that secrets are being told.
- The best way to communicate news is to hold clear, direct, face-to-face team briefings, where questions can be asked and answered. It may be tempting to hide behind memos and e-mails, but these should be used in addition to face-to-face meetings, not in lieu of them.
- Encourage questions. Employees who are comfortable asking questions will be more likely to get the real story before they spread any rumors.

Jacquelyn Lynn is the managing editor of Flashpoints, a comprehensive information resource for business owners and managers. For your free subscription to the Flashpoints newsletter and a free copy of *The Mindset of High Achievers*, visit www.theflashpoints.com.