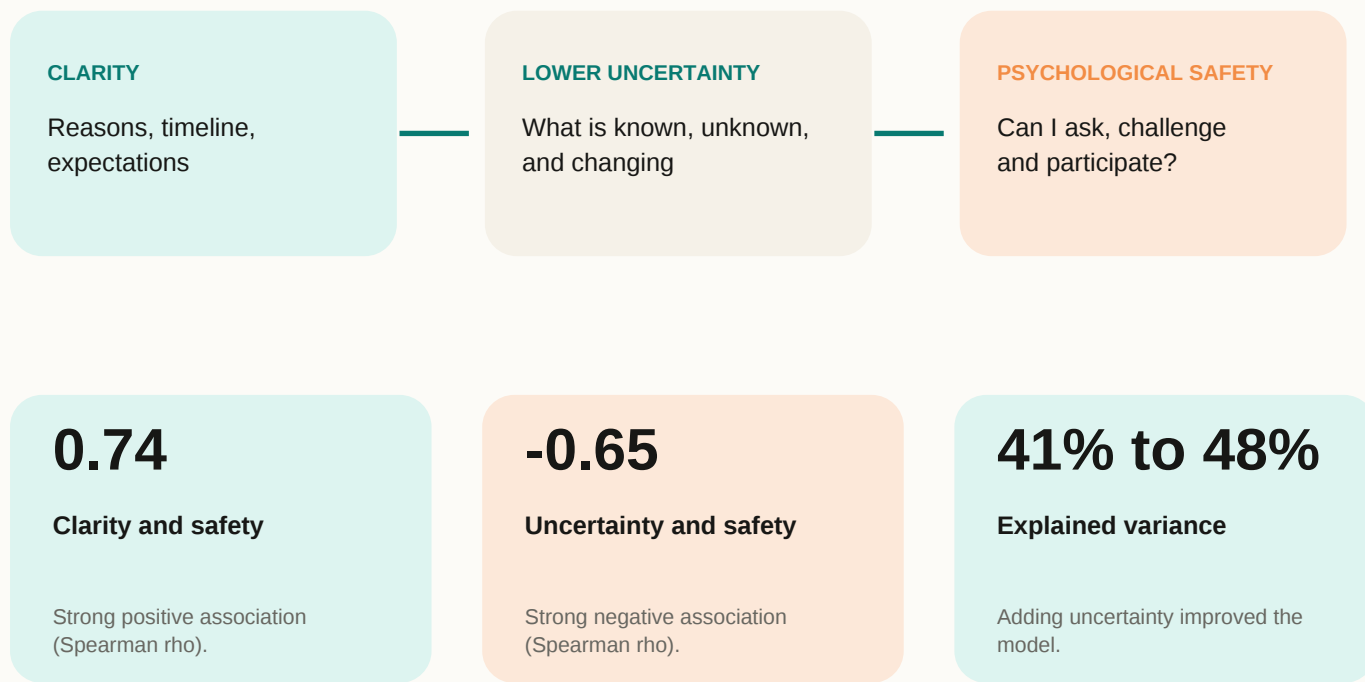


Clear communication helps. But it is not enough.

What 86 survey responses and 10 interviews suggest about psychological safety during organizational change.

THE CENTRAL FINDING

**Uncertainty is not a communication problem to explain away.
It is a condition leaders must actively reduce.**



STUDY AT A GLANCE

86

survey responses

10

45-60 min interviews

62.8%

based in Germany

What leaders should not miss

01

Consistency beats volume

Nine of ten interviewees said consistent information was critical. Contradictory messages made people stop listening - even when leaders meant well.

90%

02

Expectations matter most

Uncertainty about expectations had the strongest negative effect on psychological safety. People need to know how their work and contribution will be judged.

beta -0.41

03

Hierarchy changes the experience

Senior management and executives reported greater psychological safety than people closer to delivery. Leaders may feel safer than the organization they are steering.

role gap

04

Words need structural proof

Seven of ten wanted earlier involvement. Five of ten had stopped speaking up after negative consequences. Listening without influence does not create safety.

50% silent

Reduce uncertainty deliberately

More communication is not the same as more certainty.

1

Name the known, unknown and next decision date

Do not fill gaps with optimistic language. Make the unresolved visible and time-bound.

2

Align leaders before broadcasting

Test whether different leadership levels can explain the same reason, timeline and expectations.

3

Make changed responsibilities explicit

Clarify who decides, who delivers, who supports and what success now means.

4

Connect employee voice to influence

Show what changed, what did not and why. Feedback without consequence becomes theatre.

5

Measure the experience by level

Do not rely on executive confidence as a proxy for safety closer to the work.

WHERE THIS LED ME

From change insight to an AI adoption hypothesis

This study did not test Aptavo or AI portfolio management. It suggested why clarity alone cannot carry change: people also need aligned leadership, credible commitments and less uncertainty about expectations and the future.

Aptavo is an alpha testing whether an AI champion can surface structural fit, authority and commitment gaps before they become the person held accountable for everything.
aptavo.ai

What the evidence can - and cannot - say

WHAT IT SUPPORTS

- Communication clarity and cultural alignment are associated with psychological safety.
- Uncertainty helps explain how those relationships work.
- Leadership consistency, expectations and involvement matter in practice.
- Different organizational levels can experience the same change differently.

IMPORTANT LIMITS

- The final survey sample was 86; the qualitative sample was 10.
- Participants were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling.
- Most were based in Germany and many worked in large corporations.
- Measures were self-reported and collected at one point in time.
- Associations should not be treated as proof of causation.

SOURCE

A Mixed-Methods Exploration of Communication Clarity, Cultural Alignment, and Psychological Safety During Organizational Change

Bar Schwartz, MSc Psychology, Arden University, submitted 13 April 2025. Quantitative survey: n=86 used in analysis. Qualitative interviews: n=10.