A Workforce Reference Guide

EMPLOYEE LAYOFFS ARE NEVER EASY

ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESS & ACTION STEPS

Reduction-In-Force

Best Practices for Managers and Employees

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Reduction-in-Force: Best Practices for Managers and Employees

Prepare and support those most directly impacted by a reduction-in-force implementation by providing information and resources.

Tips for Organizational Process

- Determine critical positions and departments and the criteria for these positions regarding layoffs.
- Give as much notice of pending layoffs as possible. A lack of notice creates real resentment from those being laid off and dramatically increases mistrust of management among remaining staff (also known as survivors).
- Address the feelings that the laid off and remaining employees will experience. Provide a "safe place" and legitimize the emotions.
- Preserve the institutional knowledge and intellectual capital. Be certain to keep enough of the best people on board to accomplish organizational goals and/or have knowledge shared with others.
- Base layoff decisions on sound business analysis and data intelligence rather than making arbitrary, across the board cuts. And avoid making decisions based on personal relationships and biases.
- Be transparent and communicate openly and often. In the absence of information, employees will simply fill in their fears and anxieties with information (usually negative about the company).
- Reassure remaining employees of their value to the organization and how they can contribute to building a brighter future.
- Make an investment in those left behind. It is typical for many people to "jump ship" during uncertain times so be sure to invest time, resources, and emotional fortitude. Ineffective implementation of a reduction-in-force plan could lead to unintentionally losing excessive talent and institutional knowledge.
- Have a clear vision and plan for operating post layoff. Will the "new" organization or department be in a position to provide the services and/or products you require? Consider operational capacity.

Things for Managers and Employees to Consider:

✓	Before	✓	During	✓	After
	Clarify employee rights in a RIF		Make referral to employee assistance program (if necessary)		Unemployment Filing (if not already done)
	Career Development Assistance (resume, job search, and interview help)		Communicate honestly and often (share thoughts and feelings) and ask questions		Stay in touch with those in your network, especially high performers and well connected
	Calculate Compensation Due (leave, payroll, and severance benefits)		Unemployment filing (recommended to file before last day)		Openly communicate and recognize the need to rebuild trust and relationships.
	Consider retirement actions (whether to rollover investments)		Clarify eligibility for any continued employee benefits		Don't carry baggage over to new employer
	Obtain contact information for those in your network		Obtain reference and recommendation letters		Don't talk down leaving employees

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There are enough responsibilities to go around, and the following is a guideline of the responsibilities for managers and employees respectively.

Managers are encouraged to:

- **Exhibit compassionate and strong leadership.**
  Be prepared for and address the myriad of emotions that you are likely to observe. In addition to the financial insecurity that can be created, the loss of a job can affect other areas from confidence to self worth. Expect feelings of confusion and despair to those of anger and a lack of trust. This may be one of the most challenging and difficult times for all parties involved. Try to empathize and be understanding as you go through the process.

- **Focus on the employees who will remain as well as those being terminated.**
  In addition to focusing on those who will lose their jobs, it is equally important that leaders recognize and address the mixed emotions of those employees who remain. There is a high likelihood that productivity, morale and commitment will decrease as a result of anxiety, instability, and a perceived breach of trust. While implementing plans for the employees who will be leaving, don't forget to rebuild trust and teams with those who remain.

- **Be as transparent and forthcoming with information as you can.**
  As stated earlier, in the absence of regular, open communication, people will seek to fill in the blanks with unconfirmed, often untrue, information. Be sure to serve as a valid and dependable source of information and resist the temptation to appear secretive, inaccessible, or withdrawn.

- **Provide as many resources as you can.**
  Help your employees believe that you "have their back." Even when their positions are being eliminated, employees can feel a sense of acceptance when the process is deemed supportive and fair and real meaningful resources are put in place to help them move forward.

- **Stay in your lane and balance empathy and understanding with company loyalty.**
  This is the balancing act that you will need to succeed at. As a member of management, you will be expected to demonstrate a unified front and solidarity with the "management team" and the organization. Balance this expectation with the needs of the employees and be a leader among leaders by advocating that all the recommendations listed above this one be put in place.

- **Be smart about the restructuring and realignment process.**
  Really look at the remaining talent pool along with the organizational programs, products, and services and make sound restructuring and placement decisions. As best as you can, match people with the right positions based on interests, talents, and skill sets. How you go about doing this will send powerful messages about your commitment to the remaining employees and, if done well, will go a long way to rebuilding trust and organizational commitment.

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Uncertainty exists within every organizational environment, but employees become increasingly doubtful and anxious when they are watching their colleagues become unemployed as a result of a reduction in force. It is not uncommon for productivity to decrease significantly and for employees to spend considerable time (on the job) seeking new employment.

Employees are encouraged to:

- Be committed to advancing the organizational mission and producing high-quality work.
- Stay engaged and limit employment searches to personal time.
- Ask questions and bring concerns to management.
- Become aware of institutional policies regarding RIF and take advantage of any and all career transition programs.
- Remain connected to colleagues (as best you can) even after the RIF. This is important for those who remain and those who leave.
- The remaining employees need to be open and share their feelings and concerns with senior leaders in the organization. These individuals also should serve as a support system for one another and help to rebuild the future of the organization.
- Lean into the change. Accept the reality of the situation and be proactive in managing your career, your emotions, and your finances.
- Build and/or solidify your professional network and inform others of your impending change and interest in new and challenging opportunities. Stay connected! Lean on your support system.
- Build collaborations and establish a communication strategy that exhibits confidence and advances your interests.
- Present yourself professionally and in the best possible light (i.e. language, attitude, resume, interview skills, and presentation).
- Motivate yourself! Dance, laugh, sing, and do anything else that gets your juices flowing. You are responsible for you, and you have to pull out the energy and determination to move forward and create the life you want. No matter what, stay in the driver's seat and don't become a victim.
- Get up tomorrow, and the next day and the next day and keep it moving. Refer to this list as often as possible and take notes of your progress.

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