


# how to protect your employer brand.

A man with a beard, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt, is sitting at a white desk in profile, looking at a laptop. He is positioned in front of a large window that looks out onto a cityscape. The background is a bright, slightly blurred view of buildings and sky. The overall lighting is warm and professional.

Your guide to planning and  
conducting an organizational  
workforce reduction

# a simple plan for a successful RIF.

Delivering news that someone's position is being eliminated may be one of the most difficult responsibilities you face as a human resources professional. Conducting an event that impacts a handful, hundreds or even thousands of employees can take an emotional toll. In any situation, having an unusually high level of stress can make simple projects seem difficult, and difficult projects seem insurmountable. This guide was created to help you navigate this task with ease.

Your goal should be to create an event that will leave impacted employees feeling that your organizations delivered the message professionally and provided resources to make their transition easier, including the tools to help ensure their job search will be effective and efficient.

This guide walks you through best practices for conducting a workforce reduction event. We encourage you to adapt it to your corporate culture and to turn to an outplacement services provider to help you design an event that runs smoothly from start to finish.

## protecting your brand.

As your workforce changes, protecting your employer brand becomes more critical. When you eliminate someone's position, and they transition to their next job, it is likely that a former employee will go to work for a:

- Competitor of your organization
- Customer of your organization
- Vendor associated with your organization

It is also possible that at some point in time, you may want to recruit that person to return to your organization.

In any of these situations, you want your former employees to say how much they enjoyed working for your organization. In order to part ways amicably and preserve the ability to work with the individual again, treat them with dignity and respect during their transition. You can demonstrate this in how the news is delivered to the employees who leave and those who remain, what severance package is offered and what assistance is provided for discovering new opportunities.

## where to start.

It is always best to start with a plan. Here are some questions to ask yourself – and your executive team. Pull together the answers to these questions as a foundation for planning your event.

- How many people will be impacted?  
At first, estimate the amount and solidify the numbers as you gain more information.
- At what date will the news be delivered?  
Will everyone be notified on the same date or will the notifications be phased?
- How soon before the notification date will the larger executive team be notified? The managers?
- How will we train the managers to deliver the notification message?
- Who will be impacted? Which groups?  
What level of employees?
- How will we deal with situations where managers must deliver notifications while being impacted themselves?
- Does the WARN act apply here? Do we need to do a WARN notification?
- Who should be available and onsite the day of the notification (i.e., security, the employee assistance program (EAP), outplacement provider)?
- Have we notified our employment counsel representative to review our initial plans?

# best practices.



## assemble a team

Establish a team to plan the event. Your team should consist of leaders from HR, Finance, Legal and leadership, as well as the heads of impacted divisions. This team should be driven by an HR project manager.



## hold a planning meeting

With each leader or manager making decisions about who will be retained and who will be impacted by the event, be sure to discuss, either as a group or one-on-one, the legal (e.g., EEOC), ethical and organizational issues surrounding those decisions.



## choose an outplacement provider

Schedule a planning meeting with your outplacement services provider to ensure that resources are allocated for your event and preliminary job market research can be conducted. Be sure to thoroughly review services offered to ensure that your outplacement provider can deliver on results.



## consider timing

Deliver all notifications within a short period of time. This will help alleviate the concerns of those employees who will be retained.



## provide moral support

Have representatives from your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) onsite/available on the day of the notification to help alleviate any emotional issues that may arise for the impacted employees and those you wish to retain.



## build a business case

With the help of your executive team, create a concise business case for the purpose of the downsizing event. This information can be used in multiple communications, including notification meeting scripts, general announcements and notices.



## provide contact information

Provide a list of impacted employees to your outplacement services provider, along with the eligibility date and package assignment for each individual, as soon as possible. We strongly recommend providing contact information so that your outplacement provider can reach out and welcome your employees into the program.



## monitor social media

Continually monitor social media (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Glassdoor) for conversations concerning your organization and workforce reduction.

# best practices.

continued...



## consolidate plan

Require groups to have their lists finalized at least a week prior to the notification date. This gives you time to put together packages and finalize the process.



## hold notification training

Conduct manager notification training for all managers who will be delivering the information. No matter how many times a manager has conducted a notification meeting, it is a good idea to review the do's and don'ts.



## prepare security

In case of any volatile or hostile reactions, be sure to have security on alert the day of the notification event. However, ask security to keep a low profile. There is nothing more demeaning than having to be escorted out of the building by security when the employee has reacted unprofessionally to the notification. (Ultimately, security's presence should be based on your internal policies and the known factors surrounding the event.)



## offer transition support

Have your outplacement services provider onsite the day of the notification or soon after to conduct debriefing meetings, register impacted employees and hold orientation sessions.



## meet one-on-one

For the notification meetings, have managers meet one-on-one with each impacted individual whenever possible. This is the first signal to that employee that you respect them as an individual, which will go a long way toward preserving your reputation.



## offer resiliency training

Consider providing resiliency training for retained employees.

# project planner.

This planner will help you keep track of the most important planning and implementation steps in a RIF process.

## planning phase

action item	completion date	person responsible
Establish business case for reduction in force (RIF) and review with your legal counsel.		
Identify a spokesperson to interact with media and handle public relations.		
Determine approximate number of employees and/or positions to be eliminated. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What percentage of the total workforce is impacted?</li> <li>• What is the actual number?</li> <li>• Which locations are affected?</li> </ul>		
Establish action plan and timeline for the entire event. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On what date will notifications take place?</li> <li>• Will some employees need to be retained longer than others? If yes, which positions and for how long?</li> <li>• What retention tools/strategies will be used?</li> </ul>		
If applicable, prepare WARN Notice. If you need more information about WARN Act compliance, visit: <a href="http://www.doleta.gov/programs/factsht/WARN_Fact_Sheet_updated_03.06.2019.pdf">www.doleta.gov/programs/factsht/WARN_Fact_Sheet_updated_03.06.2019.pdf</a>		
Establish selection criteria and rationalize against applicable laws. Some criteria examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills vs. business needs</li> <li>• Job elimination</li> <li>• Job redundancy</li> </ul> For more information regarding the EEOC, visit <a href="http://www.eeoc.gov">www.eeoc.gov</a> .		
Determine benefits/severance package for employees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay in lieu of notice?</li> <li>• Severance pay?</li> <li>• Medical and dental continuation until (date).</li> <li>• EAP – Are there additional visits for employee/family?</li> <li>• Outstanding 401(k) loan payoff?</li> <li>• Accrued but unused vacation to be paid?</li> <li>• Redeployment possible?</li> <li>• Career transition assistance outplacement?</li> </ul>		
Contact outplacement services provider to schedule planning meeting.		

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action item	completion date	person responsible
Conduct first review meeting of the RIF list and timetable with executives and legal counsel.		
<p>Work with your employment counsel or your legal department to establish administrative process for workforce reduction. Tasks to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will computers/phones/other materials be collected from each individual?</li> <li>• When/how do we inform Payroll?</li> <li>• Create a mechanism for tracking benefits and outplacement.</li> </ul>		
Contact legal counsel and review list for potential negative impact and high-risk situations.		
Conduct review meeting of the RIF list and timetable with executives and legal counsel. (You should be closer to developing the final list than at the first meeting.) Determine any follow-ups for executives: Are there managers who need to turn in lists? If lists are not final yet, what is the barrier?		
<p>Create an exit packet. Examples of packet contents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal separation letter outlining benefits/severance</li> <li>• Outplacement/career transition information</li> <li>• EAP benefits</li> <li>• 401(k) forms</li> <li>• Unemployment insurance/social security materials</li> </ul>		
Contact EAP to inform them of the workforce reduction and discuss any additional benefits they can provide to employees and families.		
Identify rooms in building(s) to be used for individual notification meetings.		
<p>Establish communication strategy and timetable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive team</li> <li>• Managers</li> <li>• Memo to all employees to go out immediately following event</li> </ul>		
Develop talking points to be used by managers when conducting notification meetings.		
Schedule manager notification training.		
Decide on a date and time for an all-hands meeting, which should be included in the memo to retained employees.		
Create a retention plan for retained employees.		
Schedule appointments for impacted employees to meet after (date) with management or HR for final notification.		
Meet with Security/Facilities to identify/resolve security issues and to discuss presence on day of notification.		
Provide Payroll with list of affected employees.		

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action item	completion date	person responsible
Conduct final meeting with executives for review of impacted employee list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create final list</li><li>• Assign outplacement packages</li></ul>		
Assemble individual notification/exit packets for employees.		
Conduct manager notification training.		



# project planner.

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## implementation phase

action item	completion date	person responsible
Send final list of eligible employees to outplacement services provider (with eligibility dates, contact information and package assignments designated).		
Review and finalize schedule of notification meetings.		
Have outplacement services provider onsite/available for post-exit interview debrief and/or orientation session (recommended).		
Initiate any security procedures to prevent high-risk situations.		
Distribute memo explaining event to all employees.		
Conduct employee notification meetings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manager/HR conduct each notification meeting.</li> <li>• Manager explains reasons for position elimination and how employee is being affected.</li> <li>• HR representative explains benefits/severance package and outplacement assistance.</li> <li>• Introduce employee to outplacement representative or encourage employee to call if no representative present.</li> </ul>		
Conduct notification meetings for anyone not onsite on notification date.		
Notify temporary agencies about affected temporary and contract employees.		
Conduct meeting for all retained employees.		
Conduct one-on-one meetings to reassure key employees.		
Begin outplacement workshops/counseling sessions.		
HR staff/management meet with impacted employees on an individual basis to explain benefits/severance.		
Ensure Payroll arranges for benefit continuation through determined date.		
Send out COBRA packages to impacted employees.		
Complete final administrative paperwork.		
Provide Payroll with list of affected employees.		





## about Randstad RiseSmart.

Randstad RiseSmart is the fastest-growing career transition and talent mobility provider, and an operating company of Randstad N.V., a €23.8 billion global provider of flexible work and human resources services that helps more than two million candidates find meaningful work every year. Our outplacement, internal mobility, career development, redeployment and contemporary Tech & Touch solutions strengthen employer brands, improve retention and re-engage talent. Employers hire us because we deliver superior outcomes through expert coaching, professional branding, modern resources and on-demand analytics. Today, we are a trusted human partner of successful companies in more than 40 industries. Our passion and dedication to innovation, responsiveness and results has earned us extensive recognition and awards from organizations such as Bersin by Deloitte, Gartner Inc., the Brandon Hall Group and Fortune magazine. For more information, visit [www.randstadrisemart.com](http://www.randstadrisemart.com).