

Downsizing with Dignity

3 Key Practices for Transitioning Employees

Career doesn't mean what it always has...one long steady climb to the top, one firm...maybe two...over a lifetime. It isn't that way anymore. Careers are changing because corporations and the people that inhabit them are adapting to new competitive realities; the organization and career strategies that used to work simply don't anymore.



Ask any manager and they'll probably tell you that one of the most difficult things they've ever had to do was let an employee go due to company downsizing. Downsizing is extremely difficult for any organization. It takes a toll on a management team's resources. No one looks forward to downsizing. Perhaps this is why so many companies downsize so poorly.

Downsizing not only affects employees who have been terminated, but remaining employees and organizations' customers, investors and other stakeholders.

The following guidelines will help companies handle layoffs in a way that affords dignity to those let go and reassures survivors that the downsizing decision wasn't made arbitrarily. It will also help the remaining employees feel positive about the organization, optimistic about their future, and committed to working toward a better day.

Clear communication and transparency

Bad news should never come as a surprise. Employees are savvy and recognize when the culture quickly shifts to closed-door meetings, whispered conversations in hallways and looks of concern and stress abound. Avoid justifying the termination or placating the employee with pat statements "I understand how you are feeling" and unrealistic promises. Be transparent, compassionate and communicate with employees early.

CEOs: Be front and center

CEOs must be on duty and ready to support their managers as well as their terminated employees. Assist managers by giving them a prepared, written statement to read; including relevant facts such as, logistics concerning health insurance, other benefits, and outplacement options. Current employees will value the positive and professional solution that the company is

providing as a benefit for their former co-workers. A positive public image can be achieved through providing professional outplacement services. This exhibits a commitment to current and former employees as well as demonstrating the company's willingness to provide support for their most valued asset, sustaining company brand and loyalty.

Provide compassionate outplacement support

Every individual employee has a unique situation in dealing with and going through career transition. Soften the blow of a layoff by extending outplacement support to departing employees. Supporting with resume preparation, networking, preparation for interviews, and career or personality assessment to assist in their job search, demonstrates genuine interest in their well-being. Focus on meeting those needs and goals on a personal basis by pairing every individual with a career consultant, ensuring that candidates are moving forward in their search. Outplacement support leaves a great impression on departing employees, and those inside the company who survive the layoff.

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CMP is a talent and transition firm in the business of developing people and organizations across the full talent life cycle – from talent acquisition and leadership development, to organization development and career transition support.