

How Managers Can Respond During Layoffs

During a downsizing phase there is usually an element of pain. When people lose their sense of security it often results in a loss of productivity and a lessening of the ability to engage in creative problem solving. It is important for managers to be sensitive to these issues.

1. Be candid and straightforward about the situation within the department. No one appreciates being told everything is fine, when it obviously isn't.
2. Keep survivors informed of the changes taking place and how they fit into these changes.
3. Give survivors the opportunity to ask questions and express their opinions to management. Answer and address these concerns promptly and candidly. Explain future plans, strategies, etc. to survivors on an ongoing basis.
4. Expect low morale, feelings of overwork and attitudes like "why should I work any harder if I could be laid off at any time".
5. Don't assume that remaining employees feel thankful they've survived cut backs. Most will feel guilty, anxious that they may be next and negative towards the organization for what are often viewed as unnecessary layoffs.
6. Don't let the low morale hit bottom. Keep open lines of communication, inspire confidence in the organization's future and make clear that hard work and good ideas pay off.
7. Let survivors know how much they are appreciated.
8. Allow survivors time to mourn the loss of their co-workers. Be generous to colleagues who have been laid off and let survivors know you care about their former co-workers.
9. Diffuse tension between competing workers thrown together by reorganization.
10. Once survivors understand the organization's position, set goals that apply to this new direction. Working towards common goals will focus workers attention and energy on the future, while helping them get through the current chaos.

If you'd like to find out more about how individuals and organizations cope with layoffs and change, contact your Employee Assistance Program (Cascade Centers, Inc.) at:

1-800-433-2320

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