Laying Off Employees

Laying off employees can be a stressful task for management, as managers may be equally vulnerable to the emotional toll that downsizing takes on a workplace. The following are some tips for managers on how to approach the situation:

During Downsizing

Communicate: Communicate early, communicate often and, especially, communicate openly and honestly. Plan ahead of time what you will say. The last thing you want is to misinform anyone about the facts of an already difficult situation. If you don't have an answer, find out. The main responsibility of being a manager is to manage expectations, dispel rumors and maintain a professional atmosphere at work.

Step Up: The decision to cut jobs is a business decision. It's up to your employer who makes the lay-off announcement. Follow their direction.

Be Prepared: If you are given an official announcement by your employer, memorize it so you do not have to read it to your employees. The purpose of a prewritten announcement is to ensure consistency in the message given to the employees. The announcement usually has all the pertinent information on health care coverage and any other support the company is offering.

Take It Slowly: Be prepared to answer any questions in clear, calm language.

Expect Emotions: Some employees may be upset over the job loss. Be prepared for the fact that the anger may be directed at you. If that is the case, don't take it personally. Avoid any statements such as "I know how you feel" or "This could be a blessing in disguise." In addition, humor is not likely to be well-received in such situations.

After Downsizing

Remaining Staff: Those employees who avoided being laid off may be dealing with anger, shock, guilt, fear, frustration or resentment, especially if their friends have been let go. They may feel betrayed and less than optimistic about the company. Fear of future cuts could be weighing on their minds, as well. Do your best to be as open about communicating with them as you were with those losing their jobs. During this time:

- Acknowledge the layoffs
- Increase your availability for questions and concerns
- Clarify how expectations and roles have changed
- Highlight opportunities for new challenges and professional growth
- Set a positive example and show appreciation for the work they are doing
- Encourage them to contact their Employee Assistance Program for help

Take Care of Yourself

Like your staff, you may have a wide range of feelings. That makes it all the more important that you take care of yourself mentally and physically during this time. Here are some tips for keeping your stress in control during this transition period:

- By recognizing your feelings, you can learn to feel more in control and able to self-regulate.
- Set realistic expectations and take pride in small successes.

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› Take good care of yourself. Eat healthier. Keep coffee and alcohol to a minimum or replace them with water. Exercise regularly.

› Make the most of your time away from work. Try not to think about work when you're not there. Spend a few minutes each day doing something just for you.

› Find ways to laugh, whether with your spouse, family or friends or through books and movies. Laughter is the best cure for stress.

› Consider counseling through your Employee Assistance Program. Talking with a professional can be an effective outlet to express your feelings.

Your GuidanceResources® Program gives you 24/7 access to confidential counseling. Click or call for access to experts who can help:

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