



Human Resources Guide:

Motivating the Survivors

Redundancies are very much in the news right now but whilst there's plenty of advice focusing on how to deal with redundancy, there is little advice on how to deal with those staff left behind. However as the ones who continue to work for the organisation and deal with clients and customers, they are really important. But what can employers do to minimise the negative impact of redundancy on "the survivors?"

1. Why is it important to motivate this group?

"Survivor syndrome" can have a significant impact on work performance, individual motivation, commitment and co-operation going forward. In particular, downsizing could increase the workload and reduce the job security of those remaining employees. This may have repercussions in respect of a business' profitability and success.

The majority of sickness absence in the UK is now due to stress-related illness and increased work pressure. The threat of redundancy can only add to this increasing problem. Taking active steps to motivate the workforce, it is advised, is one of the best ways to combat the issue.

2. How to communicate the news so it doesn't de-motivate everyone?

Given that an employer is under a legal obligation, in any event, to follow a fair procedure which includes an obligation to undertake meaningful consultation, it is suggested that all employees could be involved in this consultation process (although not necessarily to the same degree as the affected employees).

The involvement of the entire workforce, will help the employer demonstrate that serious consideration has been given to the redundancy proposals and it is genuinely a last resort. To ensure the commitment and enthusiasm of the workforce is maintained, it is suggested that an employer should present a positive attitude in respect of the future aspirations of the business and the surviving employees role in achieving that goal. Clear communication will be essential and reassurance that the employer is properly managing the situation to ensure so far as possible the long-term future of the business.

3. How to control the rumour mill

It is important that a clear, unequivocal and consistent explanation of the reasons for the proposed redundancies is communicated to all employees from the outset. Employers should take a streamlined approach to any redundancy programme. This will involve ensuring that all managers are trained with the necessary personal skills and attitude, and have a common objective.

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It may further be worth producing "Question and Answer" sheets for employees to assist the consultation process and as means of addressing common queries and concerns. This will ensure consistency across the board, given that all employees will be provided with the same information. It will also demonstrate that the employer is aware of its employees concerns and taking active steps to address them.

Employees are more likely to cooperate in a redundancy situation if they are aware of the genuine reasons for it.

4. How to manage the practicalities of such a disruptive event?

It is advised that employers involve employees as far as possible in the search for solutions. Initiatives such as "gain-sharing" will offer opportunities for employees to help improve work processes and encourage teamwork.

Managers should communicate regularly and confidentially to remaining employees, to provide reassurance about their employment prospects and give them support in adapting to new ways of working.

The provision of counseling shows that the employer is aware and has identified the problems that may result from the redundancy programme. Employers should also consider arranging for someone to be available throughout the consultation period to answer any queries raised by employees as and when they arise. Again this projects the idea that an employer is genuinely concerned and has taken into account the welfare of its employees.

Furthermore, periodic employee attitude assessments are a useful means of ascertaining the impact of management actions on the day-to-day operations of the company. Employee attitude surveys also demonstrate to workers that they are an important asset.

Key Recommendations

- Communication and transparency is key to maintaining good employer/employee relations
- Involve the entire workforce as much as possible
- Present a positive attitude in respect of future aspirations of the business
- Ensure all managers are trained in the necessary personal skills and attitude
- Produce a Question and Answer sheet for employees to address common concerns
- Consider providing counseling

If you have any queries on any of the above please contact **Alison Loveday** at alisonl@berg.co.uk to discuss further issues. Alternatively you contact **Alison** on **0161 833 9211**. If you do not wish to receive further mailings please email alisonl@berg.co.uk with the words "unsubscribe" in the heading.