

Restoring Employee Morale after Layoffs

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The uncertainty of layoffs can make the morale at your organization plummet as employees feel sadness for those who have left while also nervous regarding the fate of their own positions. To boost morale, employees must understand how they can do their jobs with confidence, that they will be rewarded for good performances and that the working environment will not be tense for long.

Ways to Help Boost Morale

After layoffs at your organization, consider these tactics for helping your employees regain the confidence they once exuded:

- Communicate honestly with employees about why the layoffs were necessary and what the company plans to do to recover.
- Direct managers should listen empathetically to surviving employees and console them, as necessary. They may be experiencing grief over losing a friend and confidant in the office. While talking with employees, avoid placing judgment about the other person's feelings, concerns and attitudes.
- Create and maintain an environment of trust for your employees. Since surviving employees may feel wary about the state of organization, workers need to be reassured that their employer will thrive again.
- Communicate role changes early and effectively for surviving employees. Some may have to learn new skills or pick up additional work to compensate for the employees that were laid off.
- Focus on remaining productive while transitions occur.
- Publicize your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (if you have one) for employees. Also consider offering onsite counseling to ease the stress of employees who are left lurking in the dust of the layoffs.
- Survey your employees to identify their top concerns and modify your internal communications to address these issues.
- Make your CEO more visible to excite employees to work hard and push through. Assure that this individual has the answers to some of the most frequently asked questions from employees and has the ability to articulate the reasons for downsizing. This is also a time to reinforce the company's mission, vision and plans for the future.
- Eliminate unnecessary business work that does not contribute to your organization's goals. This may entail re-engineering some of your current processes or changing job descriptions to make clear what really matters for the company's success.
- Provide a company reorganization newsletter or e-mail campaign to provide employees information about the changes.

- Discuss the type of culture and working environment that you want to have at your organization after the layoffs are through. Identify what you will do to move in this direction, including helping surviving employees feel appreciated.
- Provide rewards and recognition for employees when they deserve it.
- Do not cancel expected events, sponsorships and programs that were planned before layoffs occurred. People want to continue to go through their daily lives in a routine fashion. Consider even increasing company events that restore harmony, trust and allegiance.

Research indicates that after layoffs, surviving employees experience the following: turmoil over potentially losing their own job; sadness over losing friends in the office; a neutral time of healing; and then eventually becoming productive once again. To help employees get through these stages quickly, your organization should communicate and listen effectively, exhibit trust in your employees and encourage them to grow as your company changes. For additional assistance on dealing with layoffs at your organization, contact The Jacobs Company, Inc..