

Effective Communication Helps to Reassure Surviving Employees After Downsizing

Whenever companies downsize or make worker cutbacks, the employees left behind often suffer poor morale --leading to decreased productivity. In addition to a negative impact on employee morale, shareholder value and community relations can also suffer. Companies often develop strategies to repair relations with these outside constituencies but often overlook the surviving employees. Companies in these situations can take steps to reassure these "survivors" of the company's situation and their own job security.

One way to ease employee concerns is to increase communication with them. This is critical because the survivors think they may be victims in the next round of layoffs. It is important for companies to reassure employees of their future with the company and confirm the company's direction and vision.

The best way to increase communication is to hold one-on-one meetings between managers and employees so any employee concerns can be heard and addressed directly.

By asking employees what they are thinking about the situation, managers can develop strategies to head off or correct any problems or misconceptions. In this respect, communicating after the layoff is just as important as communications before the layoff. This approach is the best way to diffuse rumors and reassure the "survivors" that their job is secure.

In addition to communicating with employees, employers should also take steps to increase their investment in employee development. A key driver of employee satisfaction is investing in employee development. When companies provide frequent feedback about employee job performance and jointly agree upon training and development goals, employee perception of longevity and security increase.

Companies also need to realize that while some of the employees went away, much of the work did not, placing more stress on the surviving employees. Companies should encourage employees to use their Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) if they have one, or provide similar resources if a plan does not exist.

By investing in the employee's career interests and growth, companies make a tangible commitment towards valuing their workers. When companies invest in their remaining employees, employees are happier, productivity goes up and shareholders win.

Six Tips for Effective Workplace Communication

- Provide & solicit regular two-way feedback
- Frequently ask employees what they think
- Encourage employees to ask questions
- Develop a team atmosphere
- Address employees by their first name
- Respect employees and treat them fairly