



Grappling with redundancies and recoveries

WRITTEN BY CHAVONNE CUMMINS
LABOUR MANAGEMENT ADVISOR
BARBADOS EMPLOYERS' CONFEDERATION

Harsh economic climates, growing competition, technological advancements, and pandemics are among some of the factors which affect organizational profitability. Often times when faced with these challenges, organizations have no choice but to restructure and revamp their operations which may see some roles in the organization being made redundant.

Defined as the state of being no longer needed or useful, redundancy is essentially a form of dismissal, which occurs when the job an employee was employed to perform no longer exists. While much emphasis is placed on the outgoing employee and how this change will affect their lives, not much attention is given to the remaining employees and how they too are impacted by these changes.

Research has shown that many employees whose jobs are deemed safe after a redundancy exercise, experience various emotions such as guilt, fear, anxiety and resentment which could be associated to feelings of bereavement or that of surviving a major traumatic event.

Known as 'survivor syndrome' which best describes the remaining employees' physical and psychological state following the redundancy can have serious implications for the company if the process is not managed efficiently. Employees who suffer from this syndrome have higher rates of absenteeism, low productivity, are demotivated and have low employee morale. As a result, the redundancy exercise which was meant to profit the organization by decreasing the wage bill and incorporating methods to function more efficiently, can result in decreased and poor organizational performance.

Cornelia Decher the founder of Decher Learning and Development consultancy noted that there may be instances where the remaining employees lose trust in management and any future changes would be met with resistance. It during this same time the remaining employees seek the first opportunity that presents itself to leave the company.

There are some instances where there is no alternative to downsizing and the following tips can help to restore confidence and trust in management as well as motivation and a willingness to stay with the employer.

Communicate with your team

Effective communication is the life line of any relationship. Constant communication between employer and employees is necessary during and after a redundancy exercise.

Communicating helps the employee to understand the reasons for downsizing and the role that they would now play in the restructured organization. It is vital that this communication is a two-way street, allowing for employees to voice their concerns, fears and ideas about the way forward. If there is any breakdown in communication, it can lead to unwanted rumors and further doubt in the remaining employees' minds regarding the changes. Therefore, involving the employee by considering suggestions made regarding their new work process with fewer team members, and any other suggestions are critical to restoring faith and confidence in management.

Train your managers

The majority of negative feelings experienced by employees after redundancies, are communicated to their various line managers and supervisors. As such these managers should possess the skills and ability to support staff during this time, so that they are able to handle some of the queries that may come their way. They should be able to assist the employee in prioritizing their work schedules, as employees would now find themselves having increased duties as a result of the downsize efforts which can be overwhelming for some.

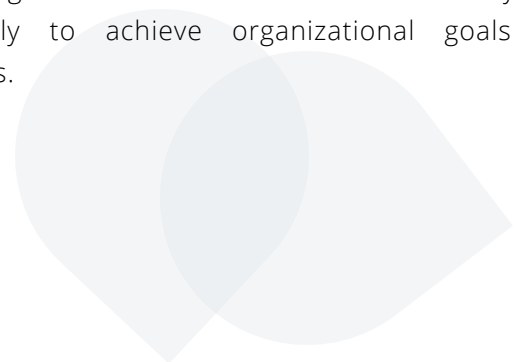
Every step of the way employees must feel that support from their respective managers. Additionally, because some companies face financial difficulties, they may be unable to afford customized training for the employees. As a result, the manager being trained, should be able to mentor and coach the employee once the role is such that can be resolved like this.

Incorporate team-building exercises

With the exit of team members (employees), all remaining employees would now need to understand their new or expanded roles, responsibilities and performance standards. Given that employees now possess greater workloads, it is essential that they know that they have a team which they can rely and depend on to assist them. Therefore, managers should engage employees in various team building initiatives which would foster team work and help them to understand the value that they contribute to the organization by showing how each department and each person's role is interconnected to achieve the business goals.

Monitor & evaluate performance

Fewer people equate to added responsibilities. Ideally, when restructuring, the skills and competencies of those remaining, should be aligned to the roles so that those who are competent enough can undertake the extra duties to reduce any skills gap which may occur. However, where this is not possible, managers should monitor their employees' performance over a period of time to ensure that they are managing and performing their additional duties efficiently and adequately to achieve organizational goals and objectives.



Where deficiencies in performance are realized, efforts such be made to provide the necessary training for employees to improve their performance to the desired level or standard.

Monitoring their performance can also identify those that are performing extremely well in the changing environment and management can use this as an opportunity to reward the employees. Rewards can come in the form of recognition, incentives related to bonuses, or other rewards for excellent performance. Introducing such techniques would not only increase levels of productivity but can also increase employee motivation.

Seeking assistance from employer organizations such as the BEC when conducting restructuring processes assists immensely, as this guidance imparts a level of know-how to employers for them to successfully navigate their teams through the challenging time. While redundancy is never easy for management or employees, the fallout and the impact resulting from these organizational changes can be minimized if organizations are transparent in their redundancy exercises, communicate with staff and engage and motivate them to embrace the changes as they chart a new course for the company.

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