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Navigating The Redundancy Process

A guide for leaders, managers and HR

ThriveWorldwide



A NOTE FROM THE AUTHORS

In a sense, everyone suffers in the redundancy process.

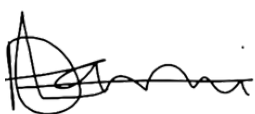
Firstly of course, the people who lose their jobs. For them it can be a form of grief, and grief is a process with many conflicting emotions. But others will feel the strain too. The people that have to announce it may find it really hard to deliver difficult news to people they care about. The people that remain employed, while they may feel relief, their morale may suffer, and they may be left with a bigger workload. Finally, the leaders overseeing the process can experience guilt, concern about their choices, and worry about the risks to reputation and culture if they handle it poorly.

The end of any relationship is never easy. But if it's managed with sensitivity, empathy, courage and clarity, it can be ended in a way that is honourable, fair and respectful. This can reduce the sense of grief and loss, prepare people for a new chapter, and ultimately become a meaningful process of change for those involved.

In this resource we share ways to do this, with a focus on: how leaders can design and oversee the process with compassion and grace; how management and those breaking the news can support their teams throughout; and how HR can help ensure the process is fair, rigorous and supportive to those affected.

And remember, an ending is also a new beginning. Your mindset and perspective will greatly influence how you approach this transition. The redundancy process can also be a time of positive change, of a different kind of growth, and of new opportunities for both the organisation and staff.

Whatever your role, and whatever stage you are at in this process, we hope you find this resource helpful.



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THE ROLE OF A LEADER

Too often, organisations come to us too late in the redundancy process.

At this point, things are often already chaotic. The whole process needs to be thought through in advance. Here are some important factors to consider:

Cultivate compassionate leadership

Bring your organisational values into the heart of how you plan, navigate and implement the process. As much as any organisation doesn't relish in the letting go of staff, this is an opportunity for your culture to grow and deepen. Be authentic and vulnerable, holding the tension of complexities. Be clear on your 'why'. And listen to feedback. It is easy to get caught up in the details, but take time to recognise the impact this may have on people, so take time to connect with your team. You may even want to consider a facilitated group reflective session for your leadership if it is a particularly difficult change management process.

If you don't have a framework, create one

Before you even think of making people redundant, you need a plan. It needs to answer questions like: How will you make the whole process fair? What key messages do we send out? How do we communicate? Who communicates it? Who's going to give the news? What news are you going to give? The challenge that employees will go through is shaped by how the news was delivered and the support systems that were provided through that process.

Consultation is crucial

Consultation with affected employees should include ways of avoiding redundancies. Prepare a proposal and allow staff time to review this and then individual consultations must be had, even if you have a group consultation. Create a consultative and co-creative process as much as possible.

Communication should be frequent, clear, honest and compassionate

If you say you'll do something, do it. If you haven't got anything particular to share, say so. When you can, create spaces to talk and provide reassurance. This will allow people to ask questions and for you to dispel rumours. You could consider an online tool like www.slido.com which allows people to ask anonymous questions.

Support your managers

Beforehand, you should build up their skills if they need it e.g. in breaking bad news or developing their ability to hold difficult conversations. And during the process, if they are the ones breaking the news, then offer them a space to decompress and process.

Focus on the team and organisational culture

After the process, consider what those still in post will need: morale will have suffered, and their role may be changing. See this as an opportunity to revisit together the organisation's vision and values, and how each person and team contributes to it. This can help reinforce the sense of value that each individual and team feels. But don't rush into this process - wait until the dust has settled.

make EPIC decisions

**As you lead the process, try to
employ these qualities**

EMPATHY

Consider the effect of decisions on those who have no say in the decision itself

PATIENCE

Take time to consider the consequences of a choice before making it

INTEGRITY

Ensure choices are consistent with the declared values of your organisation

COURAGE

Choose the right thing even if the outcomes will not be to everyone's liking



THE ROLE OF A MANAGER

You're right in the middle of this process.

As you translate the decisions of leadership to your team, whilst trying to support your team, here's some things to remember:

Invest in your skills

There are techniques that can be learned to help you have difficult conversations, develop listening skills, and manage the emotions of yourself and others. You can explore the courses we offer - they're under the 'further support' section at the end of this document. And don't be afraid to ask your line manager what you need.

Acknowledge to yourself that what you're about to do is hard

Especially if you're the one breaking the bad news, you may of course feel nervous or anxious. But don't avoid difficult conversations - the more you do that, the harder they become.

Accurate, timely and regular communication is crucial

Try to prepare people in advance by letting them know early that change is coming. For example, if the organisation's finances are a struggle right now, tell them. This helps manage expectations, and reduces the shock when it comes. It also helps foster trust. And even if you lack concrete updates, say so "I don't have specific news yet, but please know I'll keep you informed."

Know what support is available for your team

And tell them about it. If you don't know, ask your leadership what's on offer. If you think it's not enough, share ideas of what else your team might need.

Break bad news in person

Having the news broken in a face-to-face conversation will soften the impact. As you do it, try to show empathy. Sitting with people who may be angry and upset takes courage, but do let people express themselves. It's valid for them to be angry. And remember to consider those who might be on off sick or on leave, and how they will be informed.

Look after yourself

Whether your job is safe or not, this process can take its toll on you. Ask yourself questions like: how are you feeling? What support do you need before and after you speak with staff? What support is your leadership offering you? Seek out that support.

Be available for your team

You might be surprised at how much this can mean to people. Even though it doesn't change the reality of the situation, knowing they can talk when they need to can be a source of comfort. This could mean just walking around the office, hosting more frequent meetings, checking in with people, or telling them to call you.

End well

For those on your team who are leaving, how can you celebrate their time and work. It might be a card, a gift, a few words shared, drinks after work. Whatever it is, acknowledge the contribution of those who are leaving and send them off well.

Don't forget who will be left behind

A range of emotions can be felt by staff including grief, guilt, fear and anger. Assure the remaining staff that they will be supported in this transition, in their changing role, and in any new structure. Have clear conversations about all of this. It is useful to provide coaching support for those taking on leadership roles that they have previously not held. And remember that rebuilding will take time.

Did you KNOW

Breaking bad news is cultural. Some cultures teach that you should deliver it within three minutes. Others, within three days. The idea behind taking your time is to prepare people for a possible change e.g. by having conversations about ongoing challenges in the organisation.



THE ROLE OF HR

It's typically your role to ensure legal compliance, fairness in selection, and to organise employee support.

But all of this is easier said than done: we've seen HR exhausted and 'close to the edge'. A lot of what is listed above also applies to you, but in addition:

Know the law

It may sound obvious, but if the process doesn't comply with employment laws in your country then you risk legal consequences for your organisation.

Understand your organisation's policy

You may need to advise managers on the scope and extent of any policy, and of how to manage the redundancy process.

Develop fair, objective criteria for selecting employees for redundancy

This is a significant challenge: you need to factor in performance, skills, and potential for future roles, while avoiding discrimination.

Organise support for staff who will be looking for new jobs

Prepare what you will offer staff, but ask them what they might need too. In addition to the practical offer of reference letters, job interview training, CV writing workshops etc, it is a good idea to provide psychosocial support or Coaching to address their emotions and come to terms with the news, so they can move on and plan next steps in a healthy way. Check out what we can offer in the 'Further Support' section at the end of this resource.

Try to maintain positive employee relations

Foster an environment of open communication throughout the process, acknowledge the emotional impact on affected individuals, prioritise empathy, transparency, and a listening ear to minimise negative outcomes.

Prioritise good communication

Communicate with compassion, clarity and transparency for both affected and remaining employees. Timely and accurate communication is essential to maintain trust and minimise uncertainty.

FURTHER SUPPORT



Learn more about the support below at
www.thrive-worldwide.org/services

Advisory Support For HR & Leaders

A confidential space with a staff care specialist to share concerns, think through solutions, and seek advice

Resilience Check-In

Space for an individual or team to pause, reflect and plot a path through a difficult time, guided by a facilitator

Courageous Conversations

A training course to equip managers and leaders to talk about difficult situations with skill and grace

Leadership Coaching

One-on-one expert support to help you develop your leadership potential

Bespoke Consultancy

We can tailor a package of support for you and your organisation through the redundancy process, or to help you regroup following a redundancy or change management process.

FURTHER READING

How to break bad news

www.thrive-worldwide.org/blog/resource/breaking-bad-news

How to deal with anger

www.thrive-worldwide.org/blog/resource/dealing-with-anger/



Want to talk?

We're ready to support you

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