

9. Empower Your Employees - Employees need ways of gaining confidence and working through their feelings if they are going to invest emotional energy into their jobs. You need to know your people and what particular incentive motivates them. For some, it will be group awards—for others, it will be incentive pay or recognition. Increase employee relations activities, such as wellness education and vision meetings where the organization's goals are discussed.

If Cutbacks are Still Pending...

Workgroups will often divide between those leaving and those staying. A great amount of animosity and hostility will be present. Those leaving are resentful over the loss of their jobs and often project their anger at those remaining. Those staying are often uncomfortable and may feel guilty.

One proven solution to this is to organize efforts by the remaining employees to share networks, contacts, and other job information with those who are leaving.

During this time, remember that powerful emotions and mood swings can go hand in hand. It will be normal for people to be sad, angry, and highstrung all within the same day. Make sure you treat all employees who are leaving with the utmost respect and dignity. The remaining employees will judge you by how well you treat those who are leaving.

Final Thoughts

- **Set Personal Goals.**
Victims don't set goals—they only react. Help speed along the recovery by taking a proactive stance.
- **Recognize Achievement.**
There are positive aspects to negative events, and these aspects should be recognized. Time is necessary to heal the psychological pain, and management must be hopeful, honest, and liberal with its use of praise and positive statements. This is the time to manage with "soft hands and gentleness."

Training Program Available

For more assistance in this process, CM offers a complete multimedia training program, **Getting Back to Business™**, which provides videos, workbooks, and training for helping survivors after cutbacks. As a first step in dealing with the new work realities after a restructuring, the program helps increase productivity, cut absenteeism, boost morale, and communicate new performance expectations to employees.

If you would like more information about "Getting Back to Business," call us at 1.800.875.0570.

About Communications for Management

Communications for Management specializes in strategic communications and training.

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For a free list of other human resources and public relations pocket guides available from CM, call 1.800.875.0570.



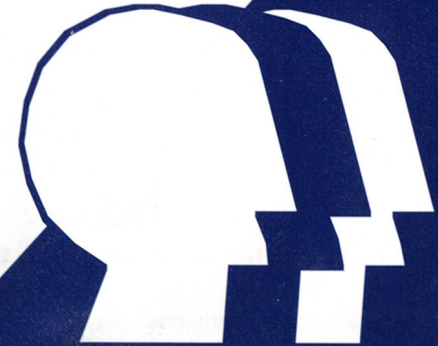
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Helping SURVIVORS After Cutbacks

A C4M POCKET GUIDE

by Frank M. Corrado
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Helping Survivors After Cutbacks

When companies cut back their workforces, most of the care and concern is directed towards those who are leaving. But what about those still employed?

Current research shows that downsizing has a number of negative effects on employees who still have their jobs, including:

- Decreased productivity
- Substandard performance
- Job dissatisfaction
- Low worker involvement
- Lost loyalty
- Increased conflict

These effects can be minimized—or avoided altogether—by developing an action plan for employees that will:

- Help them understand the grieving process,
- Get them to communicate feelings,
- Develop strong team skills,
- Counteract negative communications,
- Develop a positive approach, and
- Set goals and plans for the new work environment.

Key Concepts for Recovery

- Grieving is necessary after cutbacks.
- Don't focus just on those who are leaving.
- See downsizing as a new beginning.
- Systematically address problems as they arise.
- Realize that a transition period is necessary.
- Remember that open communication is a must.
- Understand that downsizing is not an event—it's a process.

For Supervisors: “Put Your Oxygen Mask on First”

Cutbacks pose significant psychological problems, but these problems are magnified for those in leadership roles. Many times, managers suffer the most in a downsizing. They not only have to deal with the issues of loss encoun-

tered by their employees, but they often harbor anger and guilt over having to be the one to carry out a directed layoff. It's important that they, too, have the opportunity to acknowledge how they feel.

People in work groups go through predictable stages of grief when a downsizing occurs: denial, anger, acceptance, and recovery. During this time, supervisors shouldn't hide in their offices. They need to be accessible and highly visible, talking with employees and helping them with their jobs.

Meanwhile, supervisors need to look after their own mental health. They must watch their stress level, try to be around people who are positive and supportive, and be careful to not allow themselves to get stuck in negative feelings.

Saying Goodbye to the Past

Farewell rituals, announcements, meetings, and the like help people feel their way through the situation in a safe manner. “Survivor guilt” can be dealt with by letting employees help those who are being terminated with their search for new jobs. Employees must be told what is being done for those being let go, and it's crucial to deal head-on with the constant rumors that circulate.

Here's how to combat rumors:

- Establish a communication pipeline into the “rumor loop.”
- Confront rumors with facts.
- Move quickly to confirm or deny rumors.
- Make sure there's a way for employees to get accurate information on rumors.

Helping Survivors

You have to pay a great deal of attention to the survivors. Increase in-house training and development by helping employees redesign their jobs. Remember that people who thrived in the old environment may be poor performers in a changed work culture with new priorities. Creativity, for example, may be more valued now than in the old environment.

Developing a staff for the future takes time. Though there may be pressure to get back up to speed very quickly, you need to work with your people on developing the skills that are important in the new environment.

A Nine Step Process for Helping Survivors

1. **Assess Yourself** - The first step is for each employee to honestly look at his or her emotional response to this difficult situation. Supervisors should help by talking openly and credibly about the downsizing.
2. **Manage the Grief Process** - Employees must have the opportunity to openly discuss what has happened and share feelings of confusion and distress. Hold a farewell party for those who have gone. Acknowledge the loss of the laid-off employees and the “past.” Don't try and pretend it never happened.
3. **Set Goals** - Set both short and long-term goals. Optimally, new goals should be planned with the employees, not decided at the top. Goal-setting must focus beyond the downsizing phase, using milestones and benchmarks for progress.
4. **Plan with Your People** - Involve them in the process. Work with them to figure out how to delegate the workload of the former employees.
5. **Communicate Expectations** - Explain the new job requirements in positive terms. Listen, and employees will be more receptive.
6. **Provide a Growth Environment** - Employees will now have to begin solving problems more independently. Supervisors must recognize this and give employees latitude in developing their own ideas.
7. **Monitor Performance** - Increase performance measurement to make sure employees are adjusting successfully to the changed goals of the organization.
8. **Give Feedback** - Provide feedback in terms of both team and individual performance. Team performance keeps the big picture in mind. Having survived the downsizing together, team members will have a strengthened group cohesiveness.