Making people redundant: how to conduct a notification meeting

July 26, 2017 at 13:00

Breaking the news about redundancies will never be an easy or enjoyable process, but with forward planning and a respectful and compassionate approach you can avoid adding to the distress of the affected employees and avoid long-lasting and potentially damaging impact to your organisation.

Be strategic

Approaching the conversation with a clear strategy, based on the business rationale for organisational change, will enable you to plan for various scenarios.

Formulate your goals for the process, for example what would you like the employee to leave the notification meeting thinking about?

Create a set of clear messages to explain why the role has been made redundant. As people respond differently to change, prepare for various scenarios. However try not to deviate from the key messages during the meeting.

Key elements to cover in the meeting

1. Why the redundancy is happening
Provide a reason as to why the organisation is changing. This can help someone understand why their role is being made redundant.

Regardless of an employee's performance, disciplinary record, popularity, length of employment or any other matter, you should make it clear that the position is redundant - not the person.

2. What are the consequences for them
Be clear regarding the detail of the severance package, notice period and other formalities, and any outplacement support.

Anticipate all the push-back and [questions](#) you may face and think through your answers.

3. What will happen next
Let them know what is going to happen directly after the notification meeting. For example, whether they will be able to return to their workplace or if they will be escorted off the premises.

Manage the meeting logistics

Timetable
Create as much certainty as you can around redundancy timings and logistics, with a plan and timetable.

Numbers
It is best to speak to people individually as negative reactions can be exacerbated in a group setting.

Timing
Arrange the termination meeting early in the week.

Length
Allow sufficient time for the meeting.

Location
Meet in a private room or a quiet and confidential part of the office.

Paperwork
Bring all relevant paperwork and any information related to what happens next.

Support from colleagues
Ensure you are clear about your roles. The process needs to appear professional and coordinated.

To further manage the wellbeing of employees, employers often provide on site career transition support during and after any redundancy announcements.

Your emotions

It's likely you will feel uncomfortable, anxious and no doubt sad. These are all understandable emotions.

However although the news (and conversation about it) might be difficult for you to process and manage, it is about their reactions not yours. Be empathetic without becoming emotional, and stay neutral and in control.

Their possible reactions to job loss

Some possible responses include:

- Shock and denial
- Distress and panic
- Anger and aggression
- Bargaining
- Relief.

By observing body language or extent of eye contact, you can also assess the person's level of understanding and acceptance of what you're saying.

After the meeting

Remaining staff are likely to be feeling upset about the redundancies and have questions for you so keep your door open and answer their concerns where you can. If you can, follow up with the former employee after a couple of days even if they said they were fine. If provided, remind them of their career transition support and how to access it.

Take care of yourself

Managing a redundancy process is an extremely stressful task. It is important to be aware of this pressure and to be resilient. Give yourself enough time to unwind and recuperate after the event.

This is an excerpt from an article on redundancy notification meetings. Read the article in full here.

For more information about redundancy processes, download the Redundancy Checklist – a guide for HR managers and employers.