

Leader Guide: Communicating Change to Remaining Employees after a Layoff



Audience

Managers of employees whose jobs remain after a layoff of any size

Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to help managers support employees whose jobs remain after a layoff. Though you should stick to the key messages and talking points provided by your company leadership and/or HR/communications team, this guide gives you the tools you will need to apply REAL communication (using Respect, Empathy, Accountability and Learning) with those team members whose jobs remain after a layoff.

Why REAL Communication Matters

Even if indirectly impacted, your team will be experiencing change, and as their leader, you are the best person to support them through it.

As a manager, you were likely informed of the change in advance. You had time to process the news and can approach the announcement logically. But your team did not have that time. They may struggle with emotions. How can you help? Give them more information. Answer anything you can. Give them more time. Give them perspective. Be authentic.

Announcement Day REAL Team Huddles

As soon as possible following the companywide announcement, huddle with your team. Prepare yourself in advance. Understand that your role is to provide support following the announcement. Understand your team will still be processing the news. It's important to create a safe environment where team members can share their thoughts and feelings

During the huddle, use REAL Communication:

Respect: Recognize your team members are individuals with their own thoughts and feelings about the experience. Listen to their thoughts and validate their feelings.

- Reiterate the announcement's key messages and the why behind the company's decision.
- Give team members a moment to process what they've heard.
- Ask if they understand the company's decision.
- Ask if they have any questions, concerns or feelings they want to share. Some may express these openly, but some may be silent. Do not take this as a sign these employees don't care or have nothing to say. Some people need time to process or may not feel comfortable discussing or asking questions publicly. Make a mental note to follow up with these individuals within the next few days.
- Follow up with those individuals in private, one-on-one discussions.

Empathy: Support your team members' overall wellbeing during this time of transition. Pay attention to fears about what's next and how it will impact your team members' work and home lives.

- Employees who are not directly impacted by job loss will still be impacted. This may include a larger workload, or fewer resources to do their jobs. As a manager, you can convey the importance of priority setting to your team and bandwidth to your leaders.
- They will also be impacted emotionally. They may be saddened by the sudden departure of their colleagues, or feel uneasy about increased workloads or their future job security.

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- Listen with compassion and understanding, without judgment and with empathy. Acknowledge and accept your team members' feelings as they go through this form of loss.
- Allow team members to talk about their feelings. Embrace each individual's feelings as they process the change.

Accountability: Support your team members' success. Give them clear expectations and honest feedback as you move through the unknown of change—and beyond.

- Ensure any statements you make to your team are consistent with how the company is communicating the change. Connect the change to the impact on your team and team members, if there is any.
- Share what you can about the company's strategy for the future, communicate clear expectations, and your team's goals. This may lead you to adjust them, so it's important to communicate that.
- Ask how you can help, if there are any resources your employees need that you can help connect them with. If you don't know how to help, reach out to your HR team.

Learning: Encourage your team members to be open to learning and growing during the transition. Let them know you value their strengths and support their goals.

- Leverage your team members' strengths as you look to re-assign or shift workloads.
- Tell people why you might be assigning them a new task or project, based on their strengths.
- Ask if they feel they are facing any barriers or need help identifying priorities or accomplishing tasks.
- Ask what resources they need to feel they can do their jobs effectively.

Communicating a layoff doesn't end on the day of the announcement. Continue to apply REAL communication regarding the change with your team members long after they have processed it. You can help them reinvest in their role in achieving team goals and company strategy.

Key Resources You'll Need

- Your company's talking points/script/FAQs.
- Anticipation of what your employees may ask, and answers and solutions, if you have them.
- Contact information for company resources, including wellbeing benefits and EAP information.

Key Resources to Have Available for Your Team

- You. As their leader, be there to listen, answer questions to the best of your ability, talk through concerns, workload, work-life balance, etc. As employees process the change, managers are key in reorienting them and reconnecting the work they do to the company's values and purpose.
- Mental health resources. Your team may benefit from Employee Assistance Program information—details on EAP resources, including contact information.