

Meeting Outline for Supervisors To Use When Facing Layoffs

It can be a very emotional time for both supervisors and employees when faced with a layoff. Appropriately communicating a layoff requires preparation and planning to ensure all critical information is covered.

When bringing an employee into your office to inform him/her about the news of the layoff, here are some key pieces to remember to address:

- Opening statement can be something like, "Our company is restructuring and we have come to a difficult decision. We are laying off ____ number of positions/employees and your position is included in the layoff."
- Make sure to address the conditions of the layoff such as:
 - Is the employee to leave today or in the future? Is the layoff permanent or temporary?
 - Will they receive their final check today or when and how will it be provided?
 - How will benefits be handled?
 - How will vacation pay be paid out?
 - Will severance pay be part of the layoff package?
 - Will outplacement services be offered? If so, provide contact name of provider and description of program.
- Be sure to provide the laid-off employee with a signed written statement from HR providing the conditions of the layoff.
- Make arrangements with employee to collect keys, credit cards, return company equipment and clean out his or her desk/office area.
- Provide the employee with HR contact information if they have any further questions. Remembering all items discussed is not possible for many employees due to the stressful nature of the event.
- Be prepared for various emotions from employees including disbelief, anger and sadness. Be kind and empathetic, but also firm. Do not promote or convey an "us vs. them" mentality. Do not say "I know how you feel" or "I understand what you are going through." Instead, try empathizing by saying "I can tell this news is upsetting to you" or "This is very hard news to hear." Continue by saying "Let me explain the next steps and please ask any questions you may have. I may not know all the answers today but I will find out for you or get you in touch with someone who can answer your question."
- Provide the employee with Employee Assistance Program (EAP) information so he/she has the opportunity to talk feelings with a free, confidential, and professional resource.

Regular and consistent communication is crucial during a layoff situation. Open communication about business objectives and the direction of the company will help with the uncertainty and skepticism that may occur with the remaining employees.

Staying focused on what employees are concerned with and communicating about how the business is doing will help both the separated and remaining employees better cope and understand the business decision for the layoff.