

An Employer's / Manager's Guide to Layoffs during COVID 19

Invest EAP

EAP is available to employees for **THREE MONTHS** post-employment.

Call us for help with the transition:

1-866-660-9533



Invest EAP/Centers for Wellbeing

www.investeap.org

Business Planning and Layoffs

The quickly evolving recommendations and mandates to thwart the spread of COVID 19 - Coronavirus are impacting area businesses. This resource has been developed for employers and managers as they assess their business' needs.

Layoffs not only impact those receiving the pink slips. Colleagues are impacted by layoffs through displacement or the sheer stress of witnessing the layoff, losing a valued friend and carrying a heavier workload. Families of the laid off employees now must adjust to a new normal at home.

Please let this guide serve as a resource for employers and managers who are assessing the need to cut staff or are in the process of having these difficult conversations.

Before the Layoff

The waiting period between the announcement of downsizing and the actual layoff can be a stressful time. Rumors might fly. Productivity may slow down as staff awaits the final workload re-apportionment. There could be an increase in sickness and accidents both on and off the job.

Quick and Essential Tips for Managers during this time:

- Stay connected with your employees and other managers. **Don't get isolated (and don't avoid each other).**
- Avoid or limit the "Rumor mill."
- It is important to be **visible and available** to staff. Be authentic.
- Let employees know that **they are valued** and praise good work.
- Allow time and space for emotions.
- Provide **guidance for meaningful work** during this interim period.
- Emphasize the importance of self-care.
- **Remind people that the EAP is here to help @ 1-866-660-9533.**

“The Big Picture” for Managers during layoffs



Reminder: Invest EAP can help you process and plan for any of these!

- Plan for your layoff conversations: an excellent resource for preparing to tell someone they are being laid off is [this article by the Harvard Business Review](#).
- Broadcast messages (or emails) are not a substitute for **face-to-face engagement**
- Hard times are good times for meetings. Really. [Showing up and holding space for people speaks volumes](#). Learn how to sit with what is.
- Maintain organization’s confidence by seeking wins to celebrate
- **Get all the bad news out of the way and move on.** Avoid a series of unsettling announcements.
- Provide reassurances where possible
- Engage in career development discussions. EAP has resources for job seekers and those unemployed.
- Help employees balance work and life
- Help your workers **prioritize the tasks before them**
- [Emphasize and model the importance of self-care](#)
- Remind people that EAP is here to help
- Provide other managers with talking points
- Demonstrate all employees’ **incredible value to you and the company.**

Demonstrating Value After a Layoff

It is most important to reassure the people who report to you of their value to you and the organization. **You need to talk with each of them individually to let them know why and how they are valued;** tell them what you feel they contribute to your effective, continuously-improving work environment.

No matter how reassuring you or your executive leadership have been, or how out of your control this decision was, on some level, trust has been injured after a layoff. **Employees need reassurance about their security.**

With fewer people following layoffs, **work with your customers and your staff** to identify what is of most and least value to the customer experience in order to streamline your work flow.

The people who report to you are worried for various reasons. **This is an excellent time for a career development discussion** with each of the people who report to you. Identify the additional training, resources and support they feel they need, and provide it if possible, or draw up a plan to do so in the near future.

Don't Forget Trust and Emotions after Downsizing

First, recognize that people are experiencing a loss. People will grieve even if they recognize the changes are good for them and the organization for the long term.

When people have worked together, regardless of the relationship or perceived contribution, they will experience the loss of their coworkers. You must allow them time and space to deal with anger, loss and denial. You will even have some people who feel guilty that they were chosen to remain after the layoffs. Recognize the gamut of emotions everyone including yourself, will experience. Cut the people you support some slack as you all say good-bye to the past, and **commit to the future together.**

How People Experience Change

We all experience personal distress during changes such as downsizing. Often individuals blame themselves for being weak or for their inability "to handle it." Sometimes organizations label people as "resisters" when, in reality, people move through the stages of change differently.

How an organization introduces change has a profound impact, as well. **"People don't mind change; they mind being changed,"** is a statement organizations need to take to heart. *Call your EAP if you would like to consult confidentially with a professional about your feelings or to help a colleague access support!*

Layoff Notification Meetings: A Survival Guide for Managers

Invest EAP

Notifying employees of layoffs is one of the hardest parts of doing business. Here's how to handle it with grace and professionalism.

Objectives for Every Layoff Meeting

The company's objectives for the notification meeting should be:

1. To conduct **concise, yet compassionate**, separation meetings in a respectful manner;
2. To protect the corporate and employer brand, to the general public, and for future recruitment; and
3. To **minimize negative impact on employees** leaving and staying.

The notification meeting objectives **for the employee** are:

1. To hear and **understand the message as it is intended**;
2. To **retain dignity** throughout the process; and
3. To **know the resources** available to assist in their transition.

Preparing for the Notification Meeting: A Checklist

- ✓ **Prepare a script or a few clear talking points.** This will be a difficult meeting and it's easy to forget things. A script will ensure that you convey all the necessary information.
- ✓ **Practice the message** you will deliver and how you will deliver it. Utilize the EAP supervisor consultation line or rehearse it alone.
- ✓ Prepare messages and scripts for **both affected and unaffected employees.**
- ✓ **Be prepared with printed resources** for the employee to help them in the transition.
- ✓ **This can be emotional for everyone.** Prepare yourself by staying calm, learning how to make space for their emotions, and treating each employee with respect and dignity – no matter what.
- ✓ **Select a place for the notification meeting that offers the most privacy.**
- ✓ It may be advisable to have an HR rep or their direct manager in the meeting with you, for safety and an extra comforting presence.

Holding the Layoff Meeting

- ✓ Make sure the layoff is conducted by someone with knowledge of the employee (never someone unknown to them).
- ✓ **Give the employee the dignity of a clear, straightforward explanation right away.** Do not engage in small talk or delay the inevitable. "As you know, due to the outbreak, we've had to make some hard business decisions. We explored every other option, but unfortunately, we are going to have to lay you off."
- ✓ **Do not make comments or over-explain the decision, even with good intentions.** This clouds the process. Ask if they have questions.
- ✓ **Listen to them.** Hearing the employee does not mean you agree with them; it means you value them as a person and have empathy.
- ✓ **Pay attention to their cues.** Some employees may want to ask questions, while others may want to get the information and leave.
- ✓ **Continue to speak slowly and calmly while you move to the next step in the process.** "At this point I need to go over the details of the rest of your week/day, as well as the resources that the company will provide."
- ✓ **End on a supportive note**, and offer the employee a chance to compose themselves.