

# 10 Step Guide to Managing the Message of Redundancy

Essential advice for the HR professional  
on how to successfully manage  
communicating redundancy



# INTRODUCTION

Redundancy is considered to be one of the most stressful experiences in modern life and so it's of little surprise that the job of delivering the news to employees is a difficult one. Nevertheless, how companies manage the communication around a redundancy process can have a lasting impact on those affected, as well as the wider business.

So how do you manage the message of redundancy to minimise the stress caused for departing employees, help them focus on the future and reduce the risk of low morale across the organisation?

In this guide we provide 10 steps for the successful management of a redundancy message.



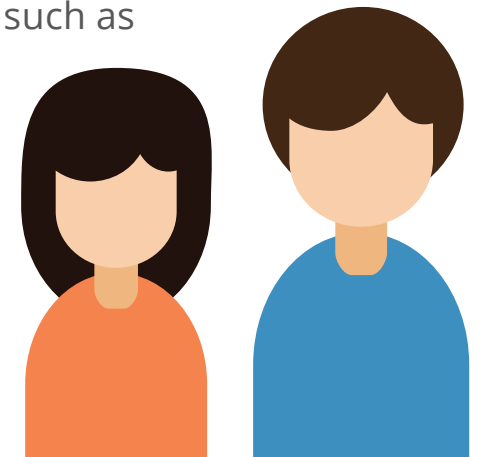
# 1. CLEAR & CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION

It is critical that you build a clear and simple message to help explain the rationale for the changes and ensure that all stakeholders are delivering the message consistently. Employees respond better to a direct and honest explanation as well as clarity on the current situation, the possible outcomes and likely next steps. An overcomplicated or inconsistent message can fuel feelings of resentment and mistrust. Where job cuts draw press attention, consider creating a press release to control the narrative and detail the steps you are taking to support departing employees.

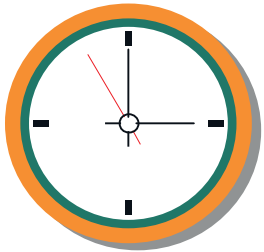


# 2. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

When dealing with large scale redundancy programmes, it can be easy to overlook the fact that redundancy will affect each individual in very different ways. Where possible, try to look beyond the basic information you will have such length of service, age, salary and benefits to more personal details such as relationship status, number of dependents or health and financial issues. The greater your knowledge of the audience the more likely you will be able to build trust and anticipate potential issues that arise during the consultation. This information can also help you to build a clear understanding of additional support that might be required by your employees.



### 3. THE IMPORTANCE OF TIMING



There is no such thing as a good time to announce a redundancy consultation, but there is certainly a bad time. Careful consideration on timing can help limit the risk of the organisation appearing insensitive and avoid any long term damage to the employer brand. Be sure to let the employees who are being made redundant know before the rest of the workforce and select a day and time that will

allow the affected individuals to absorb the news and respond. When dealing with larger change programmes, try where possible to ensure that the message is delivered to all individuals at the same time and create a strategy to deal with those not available.

### 4. FOLLOW UP MEETINGS

Don't underestimate the value of the follow up meetings during consultation as a means to help people come to terms with the potential impact of the situation. It's unlikely that employees will have thought much past the initial shock of the news when being put at risk but those further conversations afford an individual the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the redundancy that will affect them. Regular communication will means you can spot potential issues through the process and build further trust which will be vital in managing the change process effectively. The follow up meetings also provide an invaluable opportunity to build an understanding of additional support that employees will require.



## 5. REHEARSE

Regardless of whether it's a group or individual consultation, it is important to carefully plan what you intend to say. Prepare a script and practice your delivery – rehearsals will help you to become comfortable and confident with the message which is what the affected employees need. Think through the potential responses from the individuals in advance. Difficult questions will be asked so don't put your head in the sand and hope they won't occur. Be prepared to answer a range of questions on difficult and emotive topics such as 'Why me?', 'What have I done to deserve this?' and 'How will I tell my family?'



## 6. CONSIDER THE ENVIRONMENT

This is a very difficult message to hear, so it is important that any individual consultation is carried out in a private location, without the risk of interruptions. Creating an environment where the employee feels comfortable and secure will play a vital role in helping them come to terms with the news, take on board important information and encourage a genuine response which can help you manage the process much more effectively with them. Remember the little things that can help, make sure the room temperature is comfortable and make sure there is water available.

## 7. SHOW COMPASSION AND LISTEN

Naturally, you need to follow due process, remain professional, and be focused in your approach but this doesn't mean that you can't show compassion. This is an emotional experience for both the employee and for you delivering the message so don't be worried about showing empathy and give yourself the time to listen to and understand their issues. Make sure you let employees know that you have an open door and are willing to listen and answer to any questions they have, even if it takes time. Don't fall into the trap of trying to solve their problems however or let them know that you don't have all of the answers.



## 8. BE VISIBLE, SUPPORTIVE AND UNITED



It is usual for those delivering news of redundancy to feel a sense of guilt and responsibility for the situation. As a result there is a chance that some employers will bury their heads in the sand avoiding further discussion with their employees following the announcement. However, to ensure employees leave with a positive lasting impression of the company and limit any negative impact on the remaining workforce it is critical that senior managers, business leaders and HR remain visible, supportive and united throughout the process.



## 9. MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

When delivering the message of potential redundancy you might be tempted to try and soften the blow with more positive or hopeful messages. Be as clear and transparent as you can on the situation. Set clear expectations in terms of the timeframes and process involved and help them to understand what they need to do and consider as next steps. Where there is competition for a reduced number of roles, speak directly and openly about the selection process, pooling and scoring matrices so expectations can be managed effectively.

## 10. COMMUNICATE AVAILABLE SUPPORT

the blow and demonstrate that employees are not facing their next steps alone. Being seen to be providing quality support to departing employees can also help manage the process with those employees that remain. You may want to consider providing professional outplacement services from a specialist provider to help employees focus positively on the next step and quickly transition back into new opportunities.

The process of redundancy can feel like a lonely journey for an individual even when it forms part of a large scale restructure. The communication of available support can help soften



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with outplacement  
we can help.**

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