



# SURVIVOR SYNDROME

PART OF THE MORGAN REDWOOD  
INSIGHTS SERIES



## **Survivor Syndrome: How redundancies affect the staff that remain and how management should react**

Redundancies are a big issue for any business. If a company is going through a turbulent time, or a period of transition, the threat of possible redundancy can leave many of the staff feeling anxious as to their position and future. Few things lower staff morale and workplace efficiency quite like job insecurity.

When a company decides that it needs to cut costs, downsize or streamline its operations, redundancies will often be top of the list of considerations. How organisations handle the redundancy process is key, not only to avoiding unnecessary claims for unfair selection but also to give remaining staff confidence that the organisation treats its' employees fairly and with respect.

Research shows that when restructures and redundancies are announced, there can actually be an increase in performance, as individuals try to demonstrate their worth in the hope of retaining their jobs. This can be short-lived however, when worry and uncertainty take hold.

Getting your redundancy process right and supporting individuals that are leaving is also key to retaining your best staff. If you get it wrong, the staff you thought you would be reliant on for the future, will quickly put their own exit strategy in to play, and in a competitive market with skills in demand, your organisation could lose more than it planned.

### **The Survivors**

The survivor syndrome can be a common problem for organisations on the other side of redundancy. The pervading feeling for employees that have kept their jobs will be one of relief. But that can subside, giving way to anxiety over the future, illness if they have found the restructure process stressful, and even anger if they have seen colleagues and friends lose their jobs. Fear for the future compounds worry over the potential of further redundancies, and all of that can lead to a whole host of negative emotions. If not addressed, these anxieties can easily ripple right through an organisation's remaining workforce sending staff motivation and productivity into serious decline.

Research indicates that the survivors of restructures are often the ones that are ignored during redundancies, as the focus is placed on the process and exiting people out of the business. Yet it is this group of employees that are the lynch pin to the organisations future success.

One of the most difficult tasks facing any manager therefore, is how to motivate staff demoralised by recent restructure and redundancies. The worst thing a manager can do is ignore the issue and do nothing.

### **Communicate**

Clear lines of communication are needed throughout the whole process and especially after the redundancies are complete. The best thing to do is acknowledge what has taken place. Honest communication on a range of issues is what will bring people back from the brink. If people are not informed, or worse still, mis-informed, relationships will break down.

Communication is always key. A clear vision of the future and enabling the survivors to see where their role fits in will be the foundation for boosting morale, raising performance and allowing the organisation to move forward positively.

Several things will have changed in the organisation and every member of management and staff will need to be kept informed. The structure of the organisation will have changed. People's roles and their position within the overall team will have changed. Staff will therefore need to understand who is working where and who is now responsible for different processes. Procedures may be impacted by the change so will need to be reviewed and communicated in order to avoid confusion and a break down of the system.

### **Build Teams**

Teams will have changed. Every individual will need to understand their role, responsibilities and the expected performance standards. There may be extra demand placed as workload will have altered, so people will need to understand the implications and expectations of that. Everyone will need a clear understanding of opportunities for future advancement and in the very least, confirmation that no further redundancies are envisaged, so they know they have financial and job security going forward. All of this falls to management to help staff understand and deal with the change.

Getting communication right will allow management to put the brakes on the rumour mill, which is likely to have gone into overdrive following job losses. Allowing employees to ask questions in staff meetings, one-on-one's, or by responding to general communications, is essential. When staff feel like their concerns are important, when they feel consulted, listened to and when they are provided with further information about the direction of the company, they are less likely to be fearful of the future.

Whilst the budget won't be there for extensive team building exercises, it is important to do all you can to pull teams and the organisation together. Treat people with respect and communicate well and you will enable motivation and performance to soar.



Cedar House  
Glade Road  
Marlow  
Buckinghamshire  
SL7 1DQ

[info@morganredwood.com](mailto:info@morganredwood.com)  
0845 880 1811

