



# MANAGING THE UNCERTAINTY OF CHANGE

**N**ews of an impending organisational change or redundancies brings a heightened need for self-care and a focus on wellness. Nerves may be frayed and tensions high during times of uncertainty and there are ways to ensure that you and your team continue to function and even thrive during a transition. In all cases, planning to the best of your ability will set you up for success.

#### MESSAGING AND INITIAL IMPACT

When you hear news of a restructure, before jumping right in and taking action, assess your situation and that of your team as a whole and its individual members. Thoughtfully disconnect from 'doing' and consider your team members' unique circumstances, needs and possible reactions.

You may want to deliver the news of a change in different ways for different people. If your team uses assessments, like DiSC, these tools can be exceptionally helpful in deciding how and when you break the news of a change or possible redundancy.

If you don't have these tools available, think about how your team members process information. For example, ask yourself is this team member direct and prefers quick answers, or does the person need a lot of details and information. Are they resilient, accepting of change or easily excitable? Anticipate their questions to the best of your ability.

Remember that not everyone will process the news immediately and questions will continue to bubble up for hours, days and weeks after an initial notification as people work through their next steps and plans of action. You may find that some go through a grieving process with the loss of a job, the same way as with a divorce or loss of a loved one.

Many people will experience the typical stages of loss, which are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and

acceptance, yet not each person will experience all the stages or do so in the same order, so it is important to remember that behaviour inconsistent with the norm may be a part of this larger impact. The person experiencing the stages may not even realise how they are being affected so it's important to heighten your understanding, patience and awareness for those around you.

With this information in mind, consider: What is the best communication plan for you and your team? Would you like to have an open door policy? Individual meetings? Request that people save their questions or ask as they come up? The only right answer is the one that serves your team best and it will be helpful to have a plan in place prior to notification.

#### TAKE A HELICOPTER VIEW

For some, a job loss may mean promptly putting a search plan in place in order to find a similar job in the least amount of time possible, but that isn't the only option and may be the furthest thing from some of your team members' minds.

A redundancy may be an opportunity for a professional to hit the proverbial reset button. They may consider a career change, retirement, extended time off, switch to part-time work or a relocation. It's important not to assume that everyone will take the same path and to make accommodations for all.

Encourage your team to take stock of their financial situation, family life, long-term goals, work satisfaction and overall happiness. This can be done in a more formal way by offering in-house workshops or resources, like outplacement, to help individuals get out of a day-to-day focus and identify paths they would like to consider.

#### IDENTIFY THE NEXT STEP

For those who find themselves wanting to change careers, an important first step is identifying strengths and transferrable skills. A strengths focus allows people

**Redundancies are more common than most of us realise, and they may even propel people into better roles, says Alyson Garrido. Staying positive and planning to the best of your ability will set you and your team up for success.**

to grow what is going well and expand what is working, rather than fixing weaknesses.

Research has been conducted worldwide by Gallup and here in New Zealand by Dr Lucy Hone on the positive impact of knowing and using one's strengths. These studies have shown that those who are aware of and focused on strengths are exponentially happier both at work and home. So, how can you identify your strengths and those of your team members?

There are many assessments to identify one's strengths. I regularly use Tom Roth's StrengthsFinder 2.0 with clients to identify their top five strengths and careers where these strengths may be put to use.

One can also identify strengths through reflection. Consider sharing these questions to help your team members identify their strengths.

- **What comes naturally or is easy to learn?**  
When starting a new job or adding a new responsibility, what was very easy to learn? Were there tasks that were immediately easy to teach others? Strengths come naturally.
- **What do you contribute to your team or organisation?**  
On your team, are there things that are always your responsibility? No one could imagine someone else editing the company newsletter or arranging the holiday party. In other words, if you left your team, what would they be missing?
- **What makes you feel energised?**  
Think back to a day when you were on your way to work and excited about a certain project, meeting or challenge. Reflect on that time and the components involved.
- **What would you gladly volunteer to do?**  
When you have plenty to do, or are leaving for the day, what are you still willing to take on? What would you stay late to do? It could be anything from making someone feel supported to creating a marketing presentation.
- **What activities make you lose track of time?**  
Think back to the last time you sat

down to work on a project mid-morning and all of the sudden you realised you had missed lunch. When are you in that perfect zone of being productive and enjoying your work?

### START REACHING OUT

Connections are essential no matter what one's next steps are after a redundancy or change. No one needs to do it alone. Consider what you and your team members need and who can help. One may simply need to be distracted from the change and impending decisions for a while. If so, get in touch with that friend, family member, or colleague who's always been able to elicit a laugh or organise an entertaining day out.

Those feeling vulnerable may want to talk with someone who has gone through a redundancy, or depending how down they are, a mental health professional. Some may find that their main concern is how fast they can get to Fiji. In that case, a travel agent may be the best person to provide support. (Remember—a change isn't always bad news!)

When considering one's next career move, networking contacts will be a useful resource. Whether a person who was made redundant is staying in the same role and industry, or making a change, informational interviews can be a fruitful resource.

Invite a contact for a cuppa to learn about their role, company or career path. This can be helpful in determining which company, industry and role is the right next step. These contacts can also make introductions to those in their networks. End these conversations by asking if a contact knows anyone else who would be a good contact. This is an easy way to expand one's circle.

### MESSAGING

It's important for each individual to decide what story they would like to tell about their job loss. It's inevitable that people will ask and they may be concerned, so consider a communication plan early and plan

ways to keep the conversation positive.

I recommend a focus on what one is reaching toward, rather than responsibilities or environments from which someone is pushing away. A company restructure is not about an individual, so even if the redundancy feels personal, it's not necessary to share that in the messaging.

When telling a story, those who have been through a redundancy can start on a positive note by sharing what they did well or enjoyed at their former company, then mention the position elimination.

It is helpful to promptly follow up with what they're looking for in the next role or plans for the immediate future so the conversation continues effortlessly with a focus on next moves rather than the redundancy.

Many who are taking time off to rest or consider their next steps describe the time to others as a sabbatical. This term implies that the time off isn't permanent, but a needed and deserved break. This oftentimes feels more comfortable for people to explain. No one wins in badmouthing a former company.

It can be hard for people to sell themselves in job search and beyond. When one talks about their skills, they may appear calculated or worse, conceited.

You and your team members can consider talking about what you love or enjoy about your work, instead. This will usually showcase your skills while allowing you to relax and get personal. When you talk about the things you love, you'll naturally light up and show a more authentic side of yourself.

Redundancies are more common than most of us realise and oftentimes propel people into better and more exciting roles. Try your best to focus on what's next and stay positive. A little planning will go a long way as you and your team determine your next steps.

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Career coach **ALYSON GARRIDO** helps her clients identify their ideal career path and present themselves in the best possible light.  
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