

## The People Side of Downsizing

### *A Manager's Guide*

## Preparation for Downsizing

- Communication is key
- Announcement of lay off must be managed
  - *Group meeting-individual meetings*
  - *Individual meetings-group meetings*
- Give facts-why and how of lay off

## Preparation for Meetings

- Know company policies and benefit package
- Determine if EAP counselor should be on site
- Determine if security should be present/notification of local police force

## Preparation for Meetings

- Determine who will give notice and when
  - *Consider notice given by higher level manager*
  - *Followed by meeting with immediate manager*
- Determine when notice to be given
  - *Late in the day so employee can leave*
  - *Early in the morning before employees arrive*
  - *Early in the week so supports can be accessed*

## Preparation for Meetings

- Determine where to hold the meeting
  - *Neutral, non isolated but private area*
- Determine if there is a need for security to be present

## The Lay Off Meeting

- Prepare what you are going to say
  - *Inform when lay off is to occur*
  - *Inform about the benefits - also have in written form*
  - *Provide support and reassurance*
  - *Inform about the EAP*

### How to Present the Information



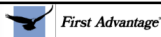
- Get to the point quickly and directly
- Avoid words like “fire” and “terminate”
- Do not argue or justify
- Be prepared to listen sensitively but limit discussion-refer to EAP
- Possibly make call together

### Closing the Meeting



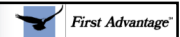
- Give employee written materials
- Thank the employee for service and commitment to company
- Discuss reference for future employment

### Quick Do NOT List



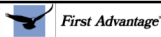
- Do NOT skip good byes
- Do NOT hide bad news
- Do NOT disappear
- Do NOT play favorites

### Common Reactions of Employees



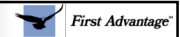
- Grief
- Embarrassment
- Sadness/Shame
- Loss of Control

### How to Respond



- Listen and acknowledge concerns
- Remember this is not about you
- Stop giving information
  - *The employee is not hearing you*
- Have tissues available
- Offer to end the meeting or give the employee a moment to “pull themselves together”

### Good Listening Skills



- Listen intently
  - *Concentrate on what the other is saying*
- Don't interrupt
  - *Focus on the employee, not what you plan to say*
- Be patient
  - *Hear the employee out*

## How to Respond



- Refer to the EAP
- Assist the employee in making the call

## The Angry/Threatening Employee



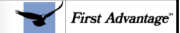
- Early identification
- Who may respond with potential violence?
  - *Continually expressing discontent*
  - *Unmanageable incidents of anger*
  - *Verbal/non verbal threats or intimidation*
  - *Verbalization of plan to hurt self or others*
  - *Inability to take criticism*
  - *Feelings of being victimized*

## How to Respond



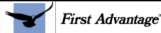
- Have security available before the meeting
- Project calmness
- Acknowledge person's feelings
- Establish ground rules if unreasonable behavior persists
- Use delaying tactics
  - *Leave the room*
  - *Offer water*

## How to Respond



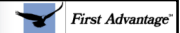
- Sit so that you cannot be blocked to access the exit
- Accept criticism of company or self in a positive way
- Be an empathetic listener
- Maintain a relaxed yet attentive positive posture

## How to Respond



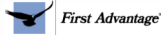
- Do NOT:
  - *Use styles of communication, such as condescension, or apathy*
  - *Pose in challenging stances, such as standing with arms crossed or at hips*
  - *Challenge or threaten individual*
  - *Attempt to bargain with threatening individual*
  - *Make false statements or promises you cannot keep*

## Managing the Aftermath



- Employee survival syndrome
  - *Provide opportunity for positive growth and change*
  - *Will continue to exist unless company provide supportive interventions*
- Managers are key in the transition

### Common Responses of Survivors



- Guilt
- Anxiety
- Work too excessively
- Critical of senior management
- Fearful of taking risks
- Anger

### How to Respond



- Communicate, communicate, communicate
- Recognize, support and reward good performance
- Give frequent feedback on impending changes
- Provide realistic picture of company future

### How to Respond



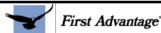
- Listen and show empathy
- Ask employees their opinion about things
- Say “thank you” and give public praise
- Acknowledge the right direction and right attitudes, do not wait until a project is completed
- Celebrates small successes

### How to Respond



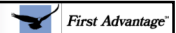
- Make training/development opportunities available
- Offer group for survivors to share feelings, concerns about the past-makes room for the new and future
- Refer employees to the EAP
- Encourage and coach

### Take Care of Yourself



- Eat right
  - *Keep stimulants to a minimum*
- Sleep
  - *Get plenty*
- Talk
  - *Take advantage of your social support systems*
- Exercise regularly
- Life-style
  - *Take time to do enjoyable activities*
- Get help
  - *Don't be afraid to seek outside assistance*

### EAP Services



- Confidential
- No cost to employees
- Professional

Available 24-hours a day,  
7 days a week  
\*\*\*  
Call First Advantage  
800.935.9551

