

## Ease Employee Stress Following Layoffs

Layoffs are never easy, and can affect remaining employees in a variety of ways. Many employees, following layoffs, work harder, are more focused and take more responsibility for getting things done. Yet, there are some who struggle in the aftermath of layoffs and react in negative ways. According to the Society for Human Resource Management, many employees feel less motivated as the economy declines, have an increased fear of being laid off and are stressed over their growing workload as they take on the tasks of others who have already been laid off.

According to the University of New Hampshire Whittemore School of Business and Economics, some employees who work in environments hit hard with layoffs actually suffer Post-Downsizing Stress Syndrome, a response to vast layoffs and increased job stress. Symptoms of this condition include:

- Difficulty concentrating at work
- Irritable attitude toward others and a negative outlook
- Heightened anger toward management and feelings of mistrust
- Higher absenteeism
- Substance abuse
- Family problems
- Health problems
- Sense of hopelessness about the future

When these symptoms are present, management and human resources must take proactive steps to curb these feelings before others are affected. Those who still have jobs probably feel grateful that they can still come to work, but they may also be fearful of the future. When fear combines with the burdens of work and job stress is increased, Post-Downsizing Stress Syndrome can become prevalent. In fact, employees can become so focused on their own efforts to

- Acknowledge employee fears surrounding their jobs and the company.
- Be open with employees about management decisions and ask for suggestions to rectify problems.
- Develop new ways to improve older products and processes with the help of your employees. Get them motivated and excited to start new projects.

**Layoffs are never easy, but it is important to consider the reaction of remaining employees. Following layoffs, some employees may work harder and have more focus, while others may react in negative ways and feel increased stress. Learn how to help employees during this tough time.**

save their jobs that their actual performance suffers.

These negative feelings can also manifest into workplace rebellion, such as theft of office supplies, products, electronics and food items. In addition, monetary theft (padding expense reports, vanishing cash, etc.) is a concern amongst employees who are struggling at work.

To assist employees during these tough times, consider the following actions:

- Encourage collaboration among people who do not normally work closely together.
- Recognize employees for their achievements and contributions.
- Communicate the future of the business often with employees in meetings, on the company intranet site, in newsletters and in blogs.

