

Date: December 12, 2018

Smoothen the rough edges, soften the blow

Illustration: Sebastian Francis

Involuntary job losses may be unavoidable in some circumstances, but there is always a choice in how they are handled

Three months ago, Deepika Ahuja and 27 of her colleagues received the pink slip from their company. Unfortunately for Deepika, her husband was one of those others. The couple have not recovered from this double whammy. Yet to land a job, Deepika's husband is fighting a sense of despondency. And she is keeping herself busy doing some writing.

“I was in a redundant role and had just returned from an adoption leave; so, this wasn't a shocker for me,” says Deepika, who had been with the company for five years. On the other hand, her husband had been promoted only six months ago, and had high performance ratings; and therefore, his ouster was incomprehensible. Some of these employees were asked to vacate the office in 30 minutes, and found their accounts blocked. As these employees were trying to make sense of what was happening, they learnt the company was going through a restructuring exercise. Involuntary job loss is becoming more common; business realities of our times provide a conducive environment for layoffs.

“Mergers often lead to job cuts and there are many mergers and acquisitions coming up in the next year too,” says Lohit Bhatia, CEO Staffing at IKYA Human Capital Solutions, a division of Qess Corp. While short-term employment and involuntary job losses may be unavoidable, there is always a choice in how layoffs are handled. And, lack of sensitivity in this matter will define how surviving employees engage with the company.

“There have been instances of employee forums similar to trade unions springing up after layoffs in the information technology sector. Such reactions by employees can cost the organisation much more than just money,” says Anuradha M.V., a faculty in organisational behaviour and human resource management at Great Lakes Institute of Management.

Provide signs

Responsible organisations send out an early warning to employees. “Giving employees enough time is key to making any layoff smooth; this could range from three to 12 months,” says Bhatia. “If the layoff is on a smaller scale then using performance as a criterion for sending out employees seems like a fairer option.

However, in this case, it becomes important to provide continuous performance feedback to employees so that a performance-related layoff doesn't come as a surprise to them,” says Anuradha.

Some companies take the help of an outplacement agency to make the exit smooth, which may include auxiliary support such as providing job referrals, giving good recommendations and connecting the person with a career coach. “An outplacement agency typically offers two to five options to employees who have been through a layoff,” says Bhatia.

The next steps

One: Leave gracefully, being prepared to talk about your exit in a positive way. “Leave the gates open if they think of rehiring you. And, seeking recommendations and reviews by your manager will be helpful for future job searches as well,” says Anuradha M.V., a faculty in organisational behaviour at Great Lakes Institute of Management.

Two: If you have been associated with any innovation within the organisation, don't forget to clarify the related copyright and intellectual ownership issues. Three: Offer your support in helping the staff who are

likely to do what you have been doing, to help them understand the details of the work so that little time is lost getting started.

Read the article online at - <https://www.thehindu.com/education/careers/smoothen-the-rough-edges-soften-the-blow/article25724289.ece>