

Beyond Outplacement –

The long term strategy to successful restructuring

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How well is your organisation managing its people before and after a restructure?

Career Transition or outplacement programmes are interventions commonplace in today's environment. Traditional outplacement programmes focus on support for those individuals whose roles are disestablished, with focus ranging from practical support such as CVs to career strategy and planning. Below we share some thoughts on how a broader approach to career planning during change might support change success in your business.

Support your people well before you restructure.

Why wait until a restructure to encourage your people to take ownership of their careers? Give your people tools to make career savvy choices regarding their career day to day and not just during times of large scale change. This way your people will be better equipped to handle unexpected

changes in their careers and make smart, informed career choices.

There are many ways you can do this. One organisation we have worked with recently offered career planning workshops to each individual, ten months prior to a large scale change. Staff knew the change was coming, and these workshops provided some means for people to continue to develop their career before change, anticipate upcoming challenges, and consider their long term career goals. A key focus was how to leverage the change as an opportunity for development – and take on additional responsibilities to grow skills or build a stronger CV.

A colleague also worked recently with an organisation that provided career transition coaching to one of their team, twelve months prior to a restructure. Given that employee was critical in terms of hand-over but was still going to lose their position due to off-shoring, it made business sense to provide career support well in advance. Career coaching allowed that individual to consider how they could really shine through this change, and put themselves in the best possible position for future employment. The end result was an employee who had the tools and support to manage their career successfully and continue to add business value through this difficult time. This led to

her confidently and professionally managing the role handover and she subsequently found another role very quickly post redundancy.

What about after the official end of the restructuring process?

The ability of your organisation to reap the full rewards from any restructure, requires those that stay behind to hit the ground running. However often this group are asked to do more with less, gel as part of a new team, and deal with range of emotions associated with change. These emotions may be fear over the future certainty of their role, guilt at the thought of their ex-colleagues out of work, and concern over how committed the organisation is to their own personal development.

This creates a risk to the business not only of key employees leaving, but also these employees staying yet becoming increasingly ambivalent or disengaged impacting productivity. Ambivalent or disengaged key employees also run the risk of spreading negative ill-will within their team and with their colleagues.

Here are some points below that will help to retain and re-engage your restructure "survivors":

Communicate and consult fully –

During the restructure remember to consult all affected employees, including those who will keep their positions but have encountered a shift in workload, responsibilities or duties. Make sure each employee is consulted (and buys-into) any changes – no matter how small – to their role.

Look after those who are exiting

Ensure that those who have exited the business were treated in a fair and empathetic manner.

Employee morale of "survivors" will be directly linked to how they feel their ex-colleagues were treated. Often the lasting feeling of those who are left behind is "it's not what they did, but how they did it".

Allow time to adjust –

Those left behind will require time to adjust to their new working environment; this may range

from juggling new parts of their role, to dealing with the loss of a close friend from the business. During this time ensure that people managers feel supported to help their team through this adjustment phase. Allow opportunities for people to talk through where they are at with their manager, an HR representative or coach.

Set a forward focus –

Although it's important for all employees to move through an adjustment phase, it's just as important not to get "stuck" here venting about the impact of the change, criticizing the decisions, and generally looking backward. A forward focus is required. Set team and individual goals linked to the company strategy, when you feel people are ready to move out of the adjustment phase. Some people may be left wondering now what? Don't underestimate the power of setting personal career goals early after the dust as settled.

Offer Coaching –

During times of post-change, offering targeted career coaching and development opportunities to key employees in the business will assist their acceptance of change, lift engagement and increase the speed with which they reach peak performance. Your organisation may like to consider personalised career development sessions with key employees left behind to focus them on their career goals and reengage them with the business.

How are you affected?

If you are in a leadership role during change yourself, make sure you fully understand and are on board with the change and have a clear vision for your team and your own career. Create a personal strategy for managing the changes yourself, to ensure you are consistently conveying confidence in the decision and enthusiasm about the future vision of the team and organisation.

To keep talented employees in today's climate, providing career transition support to those directly affected by changes is a great starting place. However smart organisations are doing much more by offering career planning information at all employees well before restructuring and continuing to re-engage well after.

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For more visit www.careeranalysts.co.nz

