

Redundancy Conversations - Tips for Line Managers

Redundancy conversations are one of the hardest things a manager ever has to do. Here are some tips and considerations for ensuring these conversations go as well as they can under the circumstances.

Your organisation will probably have a process for redundancies, taking into account any industrial agreements (awards, agreements, etc) and based on legal advice. The process may include:

- A "notification meeting", where an employee is informed their role is being considered for redundancy.
- A "consultation period", during which time employees may discuss alternative options, or seek redeployment.
- A "redundancy confirmation" meeting, when the redundancy is confirmed.
- A "script" which gives you the approved wording to use in your meeting/s with the employee.
- The option (or no option) for an employee to work out their notice period, or to be paid in lieu. This will determine their last working day, which may be different from their last day of employment.
- Policies for returning company property and revoking access to systems.
- Pre-prepared "employee packs" with the letter of termination, pay-out and leave calculations, details of support (e.g. EAP and/or outplacement).

Before the meeting

- Make sure you are clear on the process and messaging for this particular meeting (noting that it may be one step in a longer process).
- Know what options are available to the employee, e.g. whether they can choose to work out their notice period, or if there are redeployment possibilities. Allowing employees to make choices about their future gives them back a small amount of control and autonomy, which has a positive effect on wellbeing.
- Rehearse the script for your meeting, and also your answers to expected questions. Language is extremely important, and a poor choice of words can have a significant impact on people and the situation.
- Ensure the location and timing of the meeting is optimal, with no distractions, and allowing the employee some privacy as they leave the meeting. Fridays are not usually suitable as people may wish to consult external advice (e.g. financial, legal) which is not available over a weekend.
- Be clear on logistics for immediately after the meeting, e.g. will the employee leave immediately or work out the day. Where possible, it can be useful to give the employee some choice here.
- Importantly, don't make assumptions on how you think the employee will react, even when they may know that it is coming. Experience tells us that you just never know!

During the meeting

- Two people from the organisation should be in the meeting, usually the line manager plus HR.
- Ensure the room has water and a clean glass and tissues. Have the "pack" ready.
- When delivering the news, try to speak calmly and slowly and lower your tone of voice. This can help the employee to feel calmer. Deliver the news upfront and succinctly, as per the script and hand the employee the pack. Show compassion but don't add additional commentary.

- Ask how they are feeling. Be prepared for a range of emotions – anger, disbelief, sadness, worry. If appropriate, acknowledge these, e.g. “I understand you are feeling very worried/sad/angry..” Don’t try to ‘fix’ the situation for the employee or offer advice. Just listen and respond with empathy.
- Ask if they have questions. Some can be answered on the spot and others will need to be taken on notice. This kind of news can be difficult to hear and absorb. Don’t be surprised if your employee asks the same question a few times or asks for information that you have already shared. Be patient and keep answering their questions. Explain the support that is available (e.g. EAP, outplacement).
- Agree on next steps, and how you will check in with them (e.g. by phone on xx day, or another meeting on xx day at xx location).
- If possible, allow the employee a choice of whether to go back to their desk or leave immediately. Have a plan if they would like their personal effects delivered to their home.
- Ask how they will get home, if there is someone there to support them, and if they would like a taxi voucher to get home.
- Either in this meeting, or at a follow-up meeting, ask the employee how they would like to be farewelled. Some people want a big fanfare and others prefer nothing. So if it is possible give them the choice.

After the meeting

- Immediately after the meeting, do something for yourself. Redundancy conversations are one of the hardest things a manager ever has to do, and the impact is significant for people on both sides of the table. Debrief with your HR colleague, go out and grab a coffee, go for a walk around the block, or chat with someone close to you.
- Check in with impacted employee/s as agreed. Be prepared for new and different emotions as people process news in different ways and at different times. Reiterate the support that is available for them.
- Communicate with other team members as soon as possible and provide as much information as you can – who is leaving, why the decision was made, when they are leaving, how impacted employees are being supported, and how colleagues can say goodbye. “Survivor guilt” is real, and employees staying usually have 3 big concerns – 1) sadness and empathy for their colleagues’ who are leaving, 2) worry about their own job security, and 3) concern about how the changes will impact their workload, reporting lines, etc. You will need to address these concerns regularly over a period of time.

A note on Outplacement.

Outplacement, or career transition support, is extremely beneficial in helping people transition out of an organisation and on to the next step in their career. For some people the value in outplacement is professional support in coming up with options and deciding **what** to do next. For others, they need help in **how** to get there, e.g. new resume, application support, LinkedIn profile, networking advice and interview skills. If outplacement is offered by your organisation, your encouragement can make a big difference in whether your employee chooses to take up the offer.

If you would like a deep dive into some of the more common emotional reactions, and how best to respond and support your employees, here is a 45-minute webinar:

<https://info.trevor-roberts.com.au/preparing-leaders-for-redundancy-programs-webinar>

For tips on having redundancy meetings virtually, click [here](#).

